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The Frontier

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READY FOR YOU ON MAY 20th

THE DEVIL'S CALDRON

BY DON McGREW

Author of "Devil Jordan's Treasure."

Buried treasure: To the far South Seas it lured the adventurous company of the Anthony Wayne, *where, with pirates, mutineers and cannibals, there soon was brewing a fiery mess fit for the Devil's Caldron*

CHAPTER I

ROARING BILL DONOVAN

THE event which ultimately led to our adventures on that weird island, the Devil's Caldron—so called by the buccaneers who first set foot upon it—took place on a warm day in July, 1790, when my uncle's schooner, a three-master named *Anthony Wayne,* was bound southward from Portland to Savannah. It was on that day that our lookout sighted the little gig with the spritsail, and Roaring Bill Donovan, the only man aboard her, stepped upon our deck.

I was then in my twentieth year, and on my first sea voyage; and from the moment we sighted him I was filled with curiosity. What circumstances had brought him to such a pass? A giant in size, he was bandaged in a half dozen places; his gray eyebrows were twisted upward, like a devil's horns; and he had an air about him of a man who could rip an oak tree up by the roots. With his massive, craggy features, his fierce beak of a nose, a grim slash for a mouth above his heavy jaw, and skin on his cheeks like folds of leather, he seemed possessed of all the violent potentialities which break out like the eruption of a volcano in the breasts of men when boarding a vessel with cutlases between their teeth.

"A pirate, perhaps!" I whispered eagerly to Captain Van Tassel.

"Jess?" the fat skipper murmured indulgently. "Vell, maybe yet if you vas at sea in a shmall poat like hims for a vile, you vould like a birate look yourselluf. Choost vait, und ve see."

Meanwhile the giant in the gig continued to look at us closely as we hove-to near him. He had made no signal for help. Indeed, I well remember afterward that he regarded us with a mixture of relief and apprehension; and his first words, coming from a man who was about to be rescued from a perilous position, were odd in themselves.

"Where bound?" said he, in a booming bass voice, husky with thirst and fever.

"Hrrrummph!" snorted Captain Van Tassel. "Vor Zavannah—jess. But maybe," he added ironically, "you vant I should put abouit und dake you py London—jess?"

A change came over the man in the gig. He seemed quite relieved; and he lifted his hand and smiled rather wanly.

"No offense," he said, quickly. "Skipper myself—or was, till a week ago. If you'll take me aboard, by the Flying Dutchman, the port's no odds, and I'll do a trick to earn my passage."

"Vell, den!" our skipper returned—and Donovan was brought aboard, with his gig, an acquisition which the thrifty Van Tassell was not inclined to overlook.

WHEN he had been given a drink of hot coffee and rum, the big seaman smacked his lips appreciatively, and looked from the skipper to me with another smile. His gray eyes had been shrewd and keen in their first appraisal of us; they were eyes that seemed to take in everything at a glance and bore straight through you. Yet when he smiled, when the crow's feet at the edges were accentuated and his firm, white teeth were disclosed, I warmed to him immediately.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, holding out his

great right hand, with the cup in it, to the cabin-boy for another draught. "That's fine, by the Flying Dutchman! And many thanks to you, sir," he added to Captain Van Tassel, lifting the refilled cup by way of salute. Then, after taking another drink, he continued. "And I hopes you don't have the same luck. 'Twas just a week ago—though it seems more like a year—I was a-sittin' in my own cabin, a-drinkin' of my own rum, on the *Cormoran*, when I was laid aboard by pirates, burn 'em! And here I am."

"So?" was the skipper's only comment. He puffed at his long-stemmed pipe, eyeing Donovan stolidly through the curling wreaths of smoke.

"Yes," Donovan returned. "Not far out of Salem, too—and they killed all but three of fourteen hands I had aboard. Them three they set adrift with me, but they died o' wounds. They took my old *Cormoran*—fore and aft rigged, same as this here craft—and what they'll do with her I don't know. So here I am; past fifty, no ship, and no billet, but no tears to spill. And now, sir, when I've had a square meal, and a sleep, and these here cuts dressed a bit, I'll show you I'm good for a trick."

The skipper nodded slowly, as was his wont; he had only a question or two more to ask the man. But I, being afire with excitement, pressed him for further details. Donovan, however, seemed loth to discuss the piracy, and beyond saying that the pirate ship bore the freshly painted name *Nancy Simmons* and was a square-rigger with twelve guns, he added little more to the brief account.

He had sailed out of Halifax, he said, and had but two guns aboard. His rudder had been shot away at the first fire; and at least thirty men had boarded him.

"And that," he said, "was about all there was to it, my son." He shook his head gloomily, adding, "If it's just the same to you, son, I'd rather talk about wirlimigigs, or a tot o' rum, or flyin' fishes—anything at all, leastways, 'cept losin' all I had. So here's mud in your eye, and a fair wind!"

But though he fought shy of discussing those details of the fight for which I thirsted, like any youth, Roaring Bill Donovan soon proved to be a cheerful and entertaining companion aboard ship. Sometimes he was morose and brooding; sometimes he seemed to want to be alone; but after his cutlas wounds began to heal and he had been given a berth aft, was shaved and rested, he was, for the most part, the sunniest man aboard.

He could imitate a dozen and one birds and animals; he was an excellent spinner of thrilling yarns, woven about adventures he had experienced in all parts of the globe; and scarce a day passed in which he failed to transport me on the wings of his fancy to the Tortugas, or the African gold coast, or to isles where, he swore, the sands were thick with the bones of pirates who had died fighting over buried treasure. Furthermore, he had a melodious voice, and it was a treat to see him striding back and forth across the poop, stepping as lightly as a youth for all his years and tremendous size, roaring out a chanty which ran:

> "Oh quarter, oh quarter!" cried the jolly pirate then;
> Blow high, blow low, and what care we?
> But the quarter that we gave them was to sink them in the sea,
> Sailing down the coast o' the High Barbaree!

"A man after my own heart," our young first mate, Jenkins, said one day when Donovan had been aboard a matter of three weeks. "I hope Mr. Bellew has a billet for him when we get to Savannah."

The skipper removed his pipe and blew a mouthful of fragrant smoke into the air. He, too, was a large man, though not so tall as Donovan. He appeared, in fact, to be overly fat, phlegmatic, and even stupid at times. Yet many a man had been fooled, to his sorrow, by that mild blue eye, those flaccid jowls, that shuffling, rolling, spraddling gait, and his habit of dreamily puffing his pipe, as though half asleep. Underneath those layers of fat were muscles of steel; and underneath that sleepy mien was a mind that functioned like a keen rapier going straight to the point. I had seen him leap across the deck like a catamount and knock the heads of three mutinous seamen together with little apparent effort. Now he eyed Donovan and pursed his lips.

"He iss a goot navigator—none petter," he said. "Dot much I know. Und so I shall rebort."

And so matters were standing when, having been blown from our course by adverse winds, we sighted a low-lying three-master displaying signals of distress.

Chapter II

A BATTERED SHIP

"HUMMPH!" grunted Captain Van Tassel, lifting his glass. "Vot now?"

Donovan and I were standing beside him on the poop, and we followed his example, studying the stranger through long brass telescopes.

The sun was shining very brightly that morning, and the long vessel—a ship of six hundred tons burden—was clearly outlined on the waters. She was flying British colors and bore the name *Retriever*. A square-rigged ship, her sails had been taken in, save for a reef or two, and I saw at a glance that something was wrong with her steering gear; for she was broadside on to the wind and wallowing lazily in the troughs of the long, easy swells. She had a list to starboard, and was lying so low that her scuppers dipped now and again; and, as we came closer, we could hear the steady *clank-clank* of pumps working in her hold. In addition to this her bowsprit had gone by the board, and there were several gaping holes in her bulwarks.

"Roundshot," Donovan grunted.

This was more and more obvious as we drew nearer. She had been badly worsted in one of those grim sea battles which were but incidental in that belligerent and unsettled period. One shot had passed through the upper fo'c'sle; another had smashed in the corner of the cabin; and her gigs were in splinters. Only a half dozen men were in sight on her decks.

But what struck me most forcibly was this: though she was a merchantman by design, I counted as many as a dozen guns aboard her. These, with the exception of two, which had been dismounted, were jacketed; but I judged them to be nine and twelve pounders.

"A privateer or a pirate!" I exclaimed excitedly.

Roaring Bill lowered his glass and glanced at me in a sidelong fashion without turning his head. His eyes were twinkling.

"Not much difference, 'cept that one has a letter and the other hasn't," he observed, dryly. Then he turned to the skipper. "By your leave, sir," he said, "but was you intendin' to take them swabs aboard?"

His manner in addressing the captain was deferential—a habit he had

maintained ever since coming aboard. In my opinion he was, in truth, a shade the better navigator of the two; and there had been times when I sensed that he was fairly itching to crowd on canvas when the skipper was taking in sail. But he never put forward an opinion in opposition to Van Tassel's views. From the very first he had taken his trick as a sort of extra mate, ever being ready with a cheery, "Ay, ay, sir!" when the skipper gave an order. So now Captain Van Tassel lowered his own telescope and answered pleasantly.

"Vell, sir," he said, "I subbose I have to. But I don't choost like it, the looks from her."

"And right you were, sir!" Roaring Bill exclaimed, nodding emphatically. "I was going to say I had heard some-'at about that craft. I can't rightly remember what, nor where—but it wasn't good, and, anyway, you're right not to like the looks of any Britisher these days."

Captain Van Tassel nodded on his own account; but, he pointed out, common humanity bade him to give the *Retriever's* crew the benefit of the doubt. If they were pirates and looking for another ship, it was patent that they were in no position to fire upon the *Anthony Wayne,* since their ship was unmanageable and plainly sinking.

As for being boarded at the last minute, the skipper said that he would take steps to forestall this. Forthwith all hands were piped on deck. Pistols and cutlases were handed out; the jackets were removed from our long nines, which were four in number; and the brass guns were then loaded with double shot and slugs. Not until then did Van Tassel give orders to bear down on the *Retriever;* whereupon Donovan entered the cabin.

"Vell," the captain shouted, when we were hove-to close to the sinking vessel, "vot do you vant?"

The *Retriever's* skipper, who was standing on his quarter deck, eyed our captain for a moment with open mouth. He was a tall, spare man, with wide, bony shoulders, a flat, sallow face, and long, drooping yellow mustachios. Around his head he wore a blood-stained blue scarf, while two heavy silver-mounted pistols were thrust into a yellow silk sash which he had bound round his waist. He was far from prepossessing in appearance; nor were the half dozen men near him of pleasing aspect. They were a brandy-faced lot of muscular, weather-beaten old tars: some with their whiskers curled in tight little ringlets; some with brass rings hanging from their ear lobes; and all bearing a scar or two and giving the impression that their calloused hands were fully as used to the "heft" of a cutlas as the feel of a rope.

"Vell," Captain Van Tassel repeated, "I say it again: vot do you vant?"

"Want?" cried the *Retriever's* skipper then. "Why, what but to come aboard? You've an eye in your head, I reckon; this craft is slated for Davy Jones' locker, and that before sundown. Met up with a couple of Frenchies, and they shot me full o' holes."

"Vot I meant vas diss," Captain Van Tassel went on imperturbably. "You have it a boat left, maybe?"

"All stove in," was the reply.

"Vell, den, how many vas you?"

For the answer the *Retriever's* captain stepped to a hatchway and said something which we could not hear. In a trice the sound of the pumps ceased, and four men came tumbling up on deck.

"There you sees 'em," said he with the yellow sash. "Eleven, with me." Then he looked us over, and smiled. To their eleven, all apparently unarmed, save the captain, we presented a front numbering seventeen men, armed to the teeth. "Saw you loading them guns," the stranger went on. "Well, now, if you're on *that* lay, there's plenty cargo yet that ain't hurt by water—enough, anyway, to pay you for the trouble of layin' alongside. As for us—why, we haven't much choice, we ain't. All we asks is quarter, and a foot ashore, any place. Us, and four wounded."

"Ve ain't birates," grunted Captain Can Tassel. "Choost the same, dough, ve lay alongside und dakes vot dere is for zalvage—und for bassage monies. Jess. But see here. You're sure dot's all the men vot you have, eh?"

"Certainly," growled the stranger. "Rest of my crew scuttled."

"All right," our skipper returned. "Only remember—vun false moof, und it iss hell for you." And he gave orders to lay alongside.

While this maneuver was being executed I stepped down from the poop. It appeared that my chances for engaging in a sea fight were gone glimmering, and I found myself torn between relief and a sense of disappointment. Then, while I was pacing about and gripping my cutlas nervously, I looked into the cabin and saw Roaring Bill Donovan coming up from the lazarette. In his hands he carried a keg of powder.

Instantly curious, I ran into the cabin. Donovan had placed the keg on the deck, and was busy with a brace and bit boring a small hole through the top.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Watch," he said. Removing a bit of fuse from his pocket, he inserted it in the hole, leaving a bare inch protruding. This he secured with a bit of wax snatched from a candleholder. Next he produced a bit of tarry rope, which he ignited with flint and tinder.

"Now," he said, blowing on the glowing coal at the end of his improvised torch, "I don't know as I'd 've dealt with them swabs same as the skipper's doing. But nemmind that; he's skipper, and a good one. Just the same, I don't trust them swabs, and, by the Flying Dutchman, if they makes a crooked move, you'll see something."

"But aren't you apt to blow yourself and the lot of us up before you can get that away?" I cried, looking askance at that short fuse.

Donovan looked at me once more in a sidelong fashion.

"Son, don't you go to frettin' about old Bill," he said, dryly. "I knows what I'm about."

For a second I considered speaking to the captain, but in the next breath I thought better of it. For one thing, the man's very assurance inspired confidence; for another, I, too, was skeptical about the actual number of men still aboard the *Retriever.* We had had no opportunity of looking into her hold. So as Donovan stepped to the cabin door and halted there, waiting, I went out on deck and paused nearby.

Then everything seemed to happen in the space of a few heartbeats.

WE HAD barely come alongside the *Retriever* when her captain raised a whistle to his lips and blew a sharp blast. The men on his deck stooped swiftly and came up with cutlases and pistols which they had hidden at their feet, close against the bulwarks. Meantime a swarm of men came roaring out

of the after cabin, the fo'c'sle, and the open hatchway. They were armed with cutlases, and they made for the bulwarks with a yell that fairly split my eardrums.

"Gut the swabs—all hands, all hands!" roared their skipper, leaping to the bulwarks and firing both pistols into the knot of men at our after port gun.

In that horrible moment our fate seemed certain. In reality there were forty men pouring out to attack us; but at first glance there seemed to be a hundred. And though Captain Van Tassel fired on the instant, and others followed suit, dropping a man here and there, the most of our crew were thrown into a panic. I, for one, yelled excitedly and fired my pistol with only a hasty aim; in the next second I found myself facing a burly ruffian who came charging at me with his cutlas swinging high above his head.

But even before his blade fell Donovan had acted, and the tide was turned.

From the tail of my eye I saw him clamp the glowing end of the tarry rope to the fuse. It sputtered. With an upward sweep of his arms he raised the heavy keg over his head; then, with a mighty heave, the giant threw his terrible bomb toward the *Retriever's* deck. It struck the pirates' leader fairly in the breast as he balanced upon the bulwarks. He was knocked backward to his own deck, the keg of powder tumbling with him; and immediately afterward there followed a tremendous explosion.

I was knocked to the deck by the force of it. The man who aimed to cut me down pitched over me as though shot from a gun, sprawling on his face in the scuppers. A dozen more, including our own men and those who had gained our deck, were knocked into a cocked hat, as the saying goes, sprawling here and there in every imaginable attitude, while others were brought up standing, with silly, shocked expressions on their faces.

On our deck the majority had been protected from serious wounds by the intervening bulwarks of the two vessels, but the execution on the deck of the *Retriever* was frightful. Fully two-thirds of their men had yet to gain the bulwarks when the spark struck the powder in that keg. Others were still poised at the rail, ready to leap across to our planks. Of these, some were blown across our decks and into the sea; some were knocked down, unconscious, into the midst of our men; and others were killed by flying splinters. But those remaining on their own deck suffered most terribly. They were blown in every direction, three being lifted to the yardarms, where they hung, dangling, and one being thrown, tumbling end over end, to land in the sea astern.

Donovan had thrown himself prone after casting the bomb. Now we scrambled up together. Snatching up a cutlas from a fallen men, he glanced toward the poop, saw that Captain Van Tassel was down—shot through the

He thrust it quickly into his shirt bosom

calf of his right leg, as we learned later—and then rallied our men with a stentorian roar. Before the smoke of the explosion had drifted away we were following him about the deck, cutting down those who had gained a footing among us. Some fought desperately; some cried for quarter; and others attempted to jump back aboard their own vessel. We in the meantime, under Donovan's leadership, kept some degree of organization, so that isolated men were quickly borne down by a concerted rush and our deck was quickly cleared. Then, pausing a moment for breath, the giant brought us round him again with another roar.

"A round dozen of us yet?" he cried. "Well, then, by the Flying Dutchman, we'll do the boarding now."

He leaped to the bulwarks and pointed his bloody cutlas at the decks of the *Retriver,* still enveloped with drifting whisps of smoke.

"At 'em, my hearties!" he bellowed. "Follow me, all hands!"

We were over and into them on the instant, aflame with the joy of victory on our own deck and eager to be at them before they could recover fully from the shock of that explosion. We were confronted by fairly equal numbers; but some of these were still dazed and went down at the first onslaught. Thereupon the crews split into entangled groups which milled here and there about the deck, stepping over screaming wounded men and hacking at one another in a bedlam of cries and curses.

For my own part, I was close behind Donovan when he struck the *Retriever's* deck. A pirate lunged at me, and, in dodging his cut, I almost fell into a gaping hole in the planks. Donovan split the man to the chin with a whistling stroke and went on. Then another pirate came at me, and I found myself battling desperately to save my life.

How long we cut and slashed at each other I do not know. To me it seemed a century. The man fought with the fury of despair, and he cut at me so rapidly that I had hard shift to ward off the blows. He had a brutish, pock-marked face, and a patch over one eye which I saw later in my dreams. But when my lungs seemed to be bursting, and the perspiration was pouring into my eyes, he stumbled, and my blade found his neck. He went down with a choked sob.

The force of my blow had almost swung me from my feet, so that I stumbled over him and leaned, panting heavily, against the cabin companionway. Thus my attention was called to a scuffle in the pirate captain's quarters. Turning, I saw Donovan, with his back toward me. He had just cut down one of the buccaneers and was in the act of jerking something from the fallen man's hand. What it was I could not see, for he thrust it quickly into his shirt bosom before turning about.

Afterward I remembered that he started a little, then quickly recovered himself. At the time I gave it little thought. He came rushing out at once and paused abruptly to scan the shattered, bloody deck.

"Got your man, I see!" he panted. "Bully for you, Jack!" And he clapped me heartily on the shoulder with his left hand. "Well, our two was the last," he went on, pointing with his cutlas. "See there, Jack? They're done."

I looked, and saw that he spoke truth. Only a bare half dozen pirates remained untouched, and these had thrown down their arms and were begging for quarter. The fight was over.

CHAPTER III

JERRY BLUNT'S DOUBLOONS

AS I looked about the blood-smeared deck a reaction set in. The planks were strewn with dead and wounded. The dead lay in grotesque, distorted attitudes; some with the teeth showing in ghastly grins through pallid lips; some with their pale, stiff fingers hooked, talon-wise, as though reaching out for the last desperate hold on life. Three sailors from the *Anthony Wayne* had been killed outright; five more had been wounded; and the *Retriever's* dead numbered fourteen, including the captain and the mate. Of the remainder, four had received mortal wounds, and only six had escaped unhurt. When I noted the unwholesome pallor of the dead, and listened to the cries and groans of the injured, I was filled with pity and nausea.

But I was given little time to indulge in morbid fancies. Despite his wounded leg, Captain Van Tassel had drawn himself up beside the bulwarks. Standing on his uninjured leg, and gripping the rail tightly, he snapped out an order that brought our excited crew to heel in a jiffy. There was much to do before the sinking pirate vessel was abandoned; and so young Mr. Jenkins, our mate, was set busy at once, putting prisoners below at the pumps, detailing others to remove their seriously injured comrades to the *Anthony Wayne,* and setting our own crew to stripping the *Retriever* of everything transportable in the way of valuables and gear.

"Und gif a close look aft for a strong room, Mr. Jenkins," the captain added.

The poor skipper was very pale and grim as he stood there, fighting down his pain. He was nursing bitter thoughts. He knew, and the men knew, that his blunder in going alongside the *Retriever* to facilitate the removal of salvage had come within an ace of costing the lives of all of us. Donovan, on the other hand, undoubtedly had saved the day. As we paused a moment for a drink of brandy before plunging into our search, he was the receiver of many gruff words of heartfelt praise from our sweating hands; and if he had been popular before, it was plain that he was almost an idol now.

"Ah, by gum!" one said, admiringly, to a shipmate, "that was the prime dodge, and no mistake. He have a head atop his shoulders. And fight? Shiver my timbers, 'twas like follying a bull in a tea shop. You had only to pick up the pieces."

To all this Donovan waved a deprecating hand. Captain Van Tassel's name had not been mentioned, of course; but Donovan knew very well what the men were thinking. So, as he confessed to me later, not desiring to "fall foul of the skipper's hawse any more than could be helped," he made as light of the incident as possible.

"'Twas only as I has a natural tendency to be ready for such sculch," he said, tossing off his brandy. "It's all due to what others of the same kind did to me, d'y'see. And now, Mr. Jenkins," he went on, briskly and cheerily, "what's the lay for me, sir?"

The young mate was hesitant for a second—for he, too, admired Donovan immensely, and he was diffident about giving orders to a master mariner so many years his senior. Indeed, his order was made in the form of a request; but Donovan, with the cheeriest, "Ay, ay, sir!" hurried at once with me into the cabin.

"That swab," he said, indicating the dead seaman on the floor, "was the mate. Name of Cutshaw. Thought I was sure of him, minute I spotted him."

"Where did you know him?" I asked.

"Why," Donovan returned, easily, "met him in Boston once. I knows this hooker now. If I ain't mistaken, she's the old *Muscovy,* renamed. That dead skipper out there—him with the yellow sash—why, he's Brazil—Slim Brazil. You've heard of him?"

"Why, yes," I cried. "He's been posted."

"Right you are," said Donovan, busy turning out drawers. "I got a look at his mug once in Boston, afore he was posted for the gallows. At that, though, I wasn't sure of myself until I seen him blow his whistle and jump on the bulwarks."

It was on the tip of my tongue then to ask him about the object which bulged in his shirt front, but he had not seen fit to mention it to me, and I was held back by two considerations. Whatever it was, he had come upon it first, and he had saved my life. So I kept silence. Then, as a seaman came in with an ax, we fell to upon the locked hatch over the strong room. And the discovery we made there drove Donovan's find from my mind for the time being.

In four brass-bound chests we found an assortment of coins amounting in all to over twenty thousand pounds.

The coins came from the mints of many countries, with English guineas, double guineas, pieces of eight, and French Louis making up two-thirds of the total. With them were moidores, pieces from the Orient bored through the middle, sequins, piasters, crowns, and gold, silver and copper coins bearing the bas-relief portraits of nearly all the European monarchs since the Middle Ages.

In addition to this we found rubies, pearls, diamonds, and emeralds which, with other precious stones, were valued at some four thousand pounds. And from the hold we retrieved a large number of salable articles. These included bales of silk, rolls of brocade, boxes of shoes, kegs of liquor, one hundred new fowling pieces, forty clocks, a lot of pewter ware, seven sets of handsome, silver-mounted dueling pistols, a box of polished silver candle-sticks, as many as fifty powder kegs, and a dozen and one other items. Furthermore, we stripped the *Retriever* of all her rations, charts, sails, blocks and small arms before we left her. The brass cannons were left on her deck, these being too cumbersome to sling aboard at the last. Then, when the *Retriever* had settled to a dangerous point, despite the pumps, we cleared away, leaving her to sink in unison with the blazing sun on the western horizon.

THE finding of the treasure was greeted with a yell of delight by the crew; for my uncle was, above all, a just and generous man, and they knew they were due to share. It also lessened the tension. Captain Van Tassel, I knew, was promptly forgiven by the men, while Donovan's popularity was increased the more. As for the skipper, he became markedly less grim, even smiling when Donovan came aboard, and owning up to his fault handsomely.

"I dought I vas gareful," he said. "But not quite enough. Danks to you, ve haf our lifes—und plunder. Und zo I shall rebort to Mr. Bellew. Jess."

"Why," cried Donovan, heartily, "that's handsome of you, sir, and no

mistake. But you made no error——"

"I could haf made 'em gome aboart in my gigs, a few at von time," the skipper interrupted. "Zay no more. Id iss so I shall rebort."

Donovan waved his hands resignedly, but immediately straightened and rubbed his hands briskly.

"Well, sir," he said, "here's one thing you're going to let me do, right now. That's to fix a bandage on that leg of yours."

And securing the medical kit, that remarkable giant, with his tremendous hands, shortly displayed a deftness in surgery that might well have won the praise of any surgeon. Nor did he stop with the captain. Whistling cheerfully, he labored far on into the night, treating our men and the wounded buccaneers as well, extracting bullets and stitching up wounds with a skill that was admirable to behold.

"What I says," exclaimed Mr. Jenkins, "is this: there's as handy an all-around man as I've seen afloat."

In the meantime all the uninjured buccaneers had been closely guarded and clapped in irons the instant they came on board. Most of them had little to say; like their wounded, they were pale, depressed, and, for the most part, sullen and brooding. Occasionally one tried to rally his fellows; one or two attempted bravado, but the majority responded to this with grins that were all too feeble. A moment later they relapsed once more, sunk in their contemplation of the fate which awaited them. Now one licked his dry lips; now one shivered apprehensively; for they had been taken red-handed, and the shadow of the impending gallows lay over them all.

Among them was a black-browed giant, called Beef McCallum by his shipmates. He had been quartermaster aboard the *Retriever*. A fearful cut on the left side of his head had cost him an ear and had also knocked him unconscious so that he lay, breathing stertorously, for two days and more without speaking. We thought at first that the man's skull had been fractured and that he would undoubtedly die, but on the third day he rallied and, within an hour or two, was sitting up.

Going about with Donovan on his rounds—for he had continued to act as the doctor—I came upon the man, seated on a pallet on the fo'c'sle deck under a tarpaulin, along with other wounded buccaneers.

"Ha!" said Donovan. "So you don't cheat the gallows after all, my hearty."

The buccaneer winced a little and scowled at us.

"That's as may be," he growled. Then, with a look from the tail of his eye at his comrades, he spoke bluntly, but with an appeal in his bloodshot eyes that belied his gruffness.

"Could I have a word with you, sir?" he asked.

Glancing at Donovan I caught a strange flicker in his narrowed eyes. But almost at once he spoke up.

"No harm in that, I suppose," said he. "Come."

We gave the man a hand up, and in a moment had helped him, tottering with weakness, to a point amidships, out of earshot of his comrades. There we three paused, McCallum leaning against the bulwarks for support. He was no longer gruff, but stared at Donovan beseechingly. Stark fear was staring from his eyes.

"I ain't no coward," he began hoarsely, "but the gallows—I'll say I've the horrors for thought of 'em. Well, now, what I want to ask is this: if so be it I could tell you where Jerry Blunt's cache lay, would I get off?"

All the geniality had flown from Donovan's features. He eyed the quartermaster grimly, his mouth a compressed slit.

"So you know where it is, do you?" he grunted.

McCallum changed countenance a little.

"I does—that is, I knows——"

"Come," Donovan interrupted. "If you knows, spit it out."

The man searched Donovan's features closely before answering.

"Ah," he groaned, then, "I don't have no luck. You must have found the chart."

Donovan looked round about quickly. No one was within earshot.

"Grant that I have," he said. "Well, now, you want your life. There's a chance for you if you open hatches. How many doubloons is in that cache?"

"Nigh onto a million pounds, I'd figger," McCallum answered.

MY EYES were fairly popping by now, I can assure you. The name of Jerry Blunt was one to conjure with at sea. He had sailed as a privateer during the war; he had been posted for piracy later; and he was supposed to have taken no less than two hundred ships. It required little stretching of the imagination to credit him with a cache of that size; and it was plain that Donovan believed the assertion, for he drew in a whistling breath, with his eyes afire.

"And do you know where it's buried?" he exclaimed.

McCallum changed countenance.

"Yes—and no," he said, ruefully. "It's on a island out over the rim, in the South Pacific—a place Jerry Blunt named the Devil's Caldron. It's a main spot for cannibals thereabouts, though that island ain't inhabited, along of sperrits or somethin' atop the plateau. That's what Jerry says after one palaver, anyway. Well, I figgered, if you hadn't got the chart, I'd name the island, anyway, and maybe get a chance to give you the slip when we landed." And he shuddered. "I'd ruther be marooned, or risk cannibals, than swing and sun-dry," he added.

"Here," said Donovan, producing a flask. "Try a tot o' this, and then tell me what you know."

"Thankee," said the pirate, smacking his lips over the potion. "Well, then," he continued in stronger tones, "this were the way of it. Slim were mate, Blunt's first mate, some three years back. I was bos'n. We'd made good hauls, and the *Sea Lion* was fair wallowing with pieces of eight and plunder. But one or two had got away, and we was posted, and the ripple widening. So Jerry—did you ever meet up with Jerry?"

"No," said Donovan, "though I just missed him once."

"Ah," said McCallum, "he were the queer coot, were Jerry Blunt! That cross-eyed he could stand on the fo'c's'le deck facin' the sprit and catch you filchin' a pannikin o' rum from the after cabin. When he were a-thinkin' things out, there he'd squat, cross-legged like a Turk, under a tarpaulin on the poop, and a-playin' of a piccolo. 'Bowline Haul,' is wot he'd play, till it fair got on your nerves. Now he'd point the piccolo for'ard; now he'd point it aft; then he'd point it towards the cross-trees—but pipin' away all the time, with the two eyes of him looking straight in towards his nose. Never a smile on his mug all the time, d'y'mind; only now and again he'd stop for a swig from a jug which he'd sling over his elbow. 'Pickle 'em in brine!' he'd say then. 'They'll keep better till Judgment Day.' Which were a sayin' he had when we makes 'em walk the plank."

"Yes, yes," said Donovan impatiently. "But don't hang so long in

stays, man. What about the blunt?"

"I'm a-comin' to that," said McCallum. "One fine day, after such a session, Jerry pipes all hands.

"'We'll take a vacation,' he says. 'We'll sail for the isles where the coo-coo smiles,' he says. 'We'll let 'em forget us a while, and load up with pearls in the meantime.' That's what he says. So we stands for the Horn and off into the big Pacific, a-sailin' and a-sailin' from one island to another, a-trading junk for pearls. Barring the Horn, it was like a picnic, with the sea so smooth as the palm o' your hand, and a new drink to sample in every island.

"But a man gets tired of anything in time; and we was all for turning back, gibbet or no gibbet. We'd got our shares, all fair and square, and we said we'd go back with them. But Jerry was afraid for his own. He'd keep enough to outfit a ship sometime, he said, then lay low somewhere till the noise blew over, and come back later. Failin' that, he had a niece he wanted to get the blunt, in case he was caught and swung.

"'They've got this ship spotted,' he says, 'and where'll your blunt be if they get us on the way back?'

"'We'll risk it,' we says. But Jerry was still o' the same mind. So one day when some forty niggers was aboard us, tradin', what does he do but have us slough 'em in irons, and off we sails for the Devil's Caldron. There he goes ashore—him and the forty niggers, still in chains, and a-luggin' o' the chests with Jerry's share."

McCallum paused, and spat.

"Well," he continued, "not a man of us was with 'em, and where he took 'em we never knew. They was ashore a matter o' several days, hid in the jungles, though he come back once with some o' them for axes and blocks and falls. Meantime we're layin' to in the anchorage which he names Drake's Bay. But finally here he comes—him and the forty niggers. 'I suppose,' says he, 'you figger you'll teach these niggers how to talk English. But if you do,' says he, 'it'll be on the Judgment Day. Pickle 'em in brine,' he says, 'and they'll keep better till Gabriel toots his horn.' And with that he has us make 'em walk the plank, right there in the anchorage."

"He weren't no fool," Donovan commented. "And how did Brazil get the chart?"

"Why, we got rid o' the old *Sea Lion* in Rio, d'y'see, and separated. But Slim, he went on his own, and some of us joined him. Well, about a month ago, in Baltimore, Slim ran across Jerry—under another name, of course. What took place I can't say—Slim was that close-mouthed. Knifed old Jerry, like as not. Anyway, he come aboard and told me and the mate he has the chart. And we was a-sailin' for the Devil's Caldron, unbeknownst to the men, when we fell in with those Frenchies."

"And you never saw the chart?" said Donovan.

"Not opened up, no."

Donovan thought a minute.

"Well," he said presently, "you keep mum, and I'll parley with you again." And, as soon as the man was back with his fellows, "Jack," Donovan said to me, with a shrewd look, "you've guessed that chart were what I took from that mate. But it's placed now where it'll be hard to find. Don't ask me to show it to you till we gets in. But I've a proposition to make. This being your uncle's ship, and I needing one to get this blunt, I'll dicker with

"Where we took 'em we never knew"

him when we gets in. If he'll outfit us, he's to have—well, say seventy per-cent. above expenses for his risk."

What could I answer? He had the chart hidden, and possession is even better than nine points. Besides, he had saved the ship and my life as well.

"All right," I said, "but I'd like to see the chart."

"No," said he. "Someone might stumble on us while I'm a-showing it—and I've seen mutinies and knives going for far less, by the Flying Dutchman! We'll keep mum; that's our cue. And we'll go straight to your uncle when we land."

"Very well, then," I said, and we shook hands upon it.

CHAPTER IV

MY UNCLE AGREES

IN THE night we sighted land Donovan managed McCallum's escape. The captain was below; the mate, Jenkins, was on the poop. By pre-arrangement with Donovan, McCallum asked permission to speak to the skipper. Only his wrists were ironed; and as Donovan led him back along the dark deck he quickly unlocked the pirate's fetters. He went overboard with a leap, Donovan dropping the irons with him. There was no moon; he was out of sight at once, and with less than a quarter of a mile to swim, and a quiet sea, his chances for reaching shore were excellent.

"Probably preferred that way of ending it to being swung and sun-dried," was Donovan's imperturbable explanation to the skipper.

"Vell," Van Tassel commented, stroking his blond chin tuft, and pulling at his pipe, "id's a small matter."

I was glad that the skipper was not looking at me at the time. My face, I know, was as red as fire; but a diversion sent him out on deck before he noted it.

The diversion was created by one Barnaby Horn, a hand before the mast. Barring the calculations involved in setting a course there was no one aboard who knew more about ships than this wily old seaman. It was a treat to see him scamper aloft when a rope had fouled, and he was the best helmsman aboard.

But Barnaby had one great failing. He would find rum in the Sahara, given time; and no camel ever boasted a greater capacity. Yet, when he was sober, he was often to be seen under an awning on the fo'c'sle deck, with a Bible on his knees, a pair of horn-rimmed glasses down at the tip of his red nose, and his leathery, deeply-creased features painfully wrinkled as his horny finger moved laboriously from word to word! And now, hearing a yell on deck, the skipper went out to find Barnaby aglow with the contents of a stolen bottle. So I was enabled to straighten my features.

That night we lay to in the roads, and made anchorage the next day. And, as the anchor plunged, out came

my uncle, George Bellew, and his almost inseparable companion, Judge Pemberton, riding in a small boat.

"That your uncle with the white hair?" asked Donovan, who was standing beside me on the poop.

He was nodding at the judge, a man six feet in height, with very round, red cheeks, a pair of black eyebrows, as black as coal, and a great, upstanding mop of white hair, which he wore in a queue, in lieu of a wig. He was a very quiet man, as a rule, but keenly observant of everything around him, usually preferring to move his eyes rather than his head when glancing about. These eyes were black and brilliant, making a sharp contrast with his red cheeks and white hair; and his double chin was drawn back somewhat into the folds of his stock, while his tightly compressed lips dropped sharply at the corners, giving one the impression that here was a very stern and stately man indeed. As usual he was sitting very erect, with his square hands folded over a gold-headed cane.

"No," I replied to Donovan, "the other's my uncle."

Immediately Donovan chuckled, for my uncle, though nearly as old as the judge—who approached forty-five—had caught sight of me and was waving and shouting like any lad. He, too, was a large, broad-shouldered man; but though he was one of the wealthiest shippers in Savannah, he was described by his associates as an overgrown, boisterous boy. He was ever ready to shake your hand or fight you for the sport of it; he would wager on any contest, from a cock fight to a horse race; and nothing, I do believe, would have suited him better than to put to sea under the Jolly Roger for the sheer sport of the thing. Aunt Martha, who occasionally called him Vesuvius, and described her life with him as a "career," may, in all likelihood, be given credit for keeping him from an inglorious end on the gallows.

"I think he'll go," said Donovan, as I shouted back to Uncle George.

Still shouting salutations, Uncle George came closer in, and looked up at us with his handsome, dark face wreathed in smiles. He had flashing white teeth, snapping brown eyes, and clear-skinned, aquiline features which might well have tempted a sculptor.

"Well, old sober-sides," he yelled at Captain Van Tassel, "what has the Dutchman brought home this time?"

The skipper, who had been walking a day or more, smiled and removed his pipe.

"Blunder," he replied. "Und pirates. Und a shot in mine leg."

"What?" cried Uncle George—and in a moment he was coming aboard us, wildly excited.

Captain Van Tassel told the story briefly, in a characteristic monotone. Uncle George hung on every word, his eyes dilated, and every now and then breaking in with a delighted exclamation. Even the judge forgot to look so terribly formidable and bent forward with eager interest.

When the skipper touched on Donovan's exploit, he spared himself not a whit. Uncle George, I saw at once, had taken an instant liking to Donovan; and now, as that worthy stood quietly by, looking very modest indeed, my impetuous relative seized him by the hand and wrung it heartily. But immediately afterward he clapped the skipper a resounding blow on the back.

"Not a word of blame to you!" he cried, with a deep affection ringing in his voice. "I would probably have done the same identical thing. All's well that ends well—and if you hadn't heaved alongside, Captain Donovan couldn't have thrown the keg, and they might have tripped you up later. Tut, tut, not a word. As for the men, they shall have two hundred pounds apiece, by the Lord Harry! I'll take care of you, Skipper, and you, Captain Donovan, never fear. And you—" he wheeled and threw an affectionate arm around my shoulder—"so you've won your spurs with a cutlas, eh? Bless my soul, I'd 've given much to have been there and watched you do it, my boy."

Now, to tell the truth, I had suffered several twinges of conscience when thinking about the chart, for I felt, somehow, that I should have taken Captain Van Tassel into my confidence. My uncle's display of affection for his trusted henchman stirred my conscience anew. So, when he and the judge and the skipper retired to the cabin to go over the log and manifests, I spoke of my feelings to Donovan.

"Well," he said, turning out his palms, and raising his eyebrows and shoulders, "how was I to know how they stood? But here: I'll explain that to your uncle, soon as he's free."

When the skipper came out I told Uncle George we had something more of importance to tell him, and Donovan and I were admitted at once. Uncle George looked from one to the other of us inquiringly.

"Not more surprises?" he cried, jovially. "Can't stand too much all in one morning, you know."

"Well, sir," said Donovan, extracting a rectangular packet from his shirt, "it'll be a surprise, I shouldn't wonder. This here's the key to something like a million pounds."

MY UNCLE'S mouth flew open; the judge dropped his cane.

"Buried treasure?" my uncle cried.

"Yes — Jerry Blunt's," Donovan replied.

Uncle George stared at him for several seconds.

"Well," he said, then, "go on."

Speaking easily, the giant told how he had come upon the chart. Seeing a man dodge into the cabin during the fight, he said, he had rushed in upon him. The man was jerking the packet from a locker. Having cut him down, Donovan said, he had thrust the thing into his shirt.

"I half suspected what it was at the time," he said. "Anyway, it was something that mate wanted desperate bad. Like as not he figgered to buy his life with it."

Having examined it later, he went on, he had at first decided to say nothing about it until he reached Savannah and had an audience with the ship's owner. Then he told of McCallum's proposal in my presence and of our subsequent compact.

At this my uncle frowned and banged his fist on the table.

"You both did very wrong!" he cried. "I mean, sir, in not telling Captain Van Tassel. I trust him. He is myself, in fact, when at sea, so far as anything happening on board is concerned."

Donovan shrugged placatingly.

"How was I to know all that?" he cried. "Point is this, though. Here I be, talking with a man able to outfit an expedition, I take it, and the man entitled to a chance at it, seein' as how it was his ship picked me up, and all that. Now——"

"George," the judge cut in, "don't be so confounded ethical. The man saved your ship; he found the chart; and now he's here with it."

"Very well," said my uncle, smiling once more. "But if I agree to finance it, Captain Van Tassel is to sail the ship, and share."

"Fair enough!" Donovan cried instantly, his face beaming.

"Then, Jack," said Uncle George, "call the captain in at once."

Captain Van Tassel received the news with one of his few signs of emotion. He puffed a little harder at his pipe. As for Donovan's semi-apologetic explanation of his silence, he waved this aside.

"You had it a right to look oudt for yourselluf," he grunted.

"And now, sir, the chart!" cried my uncle.

Donovan handed the packet to Uncle George, whose fingers trembled as he slipped off the canvas covering. Inside this was an oilskin casing, and within that the chart, drawn out in ink upon heavy white parchment.

Spread out upon the table, there was revealed the outline of an island. It was over twelve miles in length over all, and about ten in width. Three prominent peninsulas projected from it, one running down along the eastern coast and shaped so that the pirates had dubbed it Blackbeard's Boot. Another one, with a hill at the southern end, projected just below it and roughly resembled a human wrist and clenched fist. This was called Kidd's Mauley. Between the two was the entrance to Drake's Bay, a long inlet over a mile in width and running northward for a distance of four miles or so, with Blackbeard's Boot on one side and the mainland on the other, to the mouth of a river. The river flowed from a lake which lay in the center of a high, oblong plateau—this plateau being about four miles in width and running almost the length of the island, along its middle line. The southern end of the plateau was marked by a high hill, called Execution Knob, and the northern end by another peak dubbed London Tower. A waterfall was shown at the point where the river plunged downward from the plateau, called the Bos'n's Roar, while the lake which fed the stream was named the Devil's Caldron.

But what drew all eyes at once was the word "Cache," over a black cross. This was marked on the plateau to the southward of the lake and at the apex of an equilateral triangle which had been drawn on the chart. The base of the triangle had been formed by a line running due north from a cave on the northern footslopes of Execution Knob and passing through a spot marked Bald Rock. And on the margin were these words, printed in black ink:

Lay due north from northeast corner of cave to locate bald rock. In line with tip of London Tower and cave. Take bearing due southwest from southern side Bald Rock, and due northwest from northeast corner of cave. Cache lies at intersection.

This was followed by the notation, in a clear, concise hand:

Buried in August, 1787, under direction of Randolph J. Blunt.

"That was his name!" cried Uncle George, looking up. "Why, I talked to the man once. As smooth as smooth—and an eye in his head! Man!"

"See here," said the judge. "It looks as thought the bottom of this chart had been cut off."

"So?" exclaimed my uncle, looking at it more closely. And he glanced up at Donovan.

"It's just as it was when I got it," said that worthy, easily. "Probably the sheet was cut from a roll."

"Probably, very probably," said my uncle. Then he looked all round, from one to the other, his eyes shining like lamps. "By gad!" he cried, slamming his fist on the table. "We'll sail for this Devil's Caldron as soon as we can rig over this ship!"

CHAPTER V

EQUIPPED AND MANNED

MY UNCLE'S decision filled me with glee, and Donovan was fairly beaming with delight. Judge Pemberton at first tried to dissuade his crony, but when Uncle George, with a volley of tremendous, round oaths, declared that he would have that treasure or die trying, the judge gave in and smiled.

"It isn't so much the treasure," he said, "as it is the adventure of the thing. That's what is pulling at you, George."

"And you, too, damn it!" cried my uncle. "You're going along, and intended to from the first."

"Well, you'll need watching," said his boon companion.

Captain Van Tassel at first said nothing whatever. His features were enigmatical.

"Vell, going around dot Horn ain'd like picking flowers," he remarked when urged for his opinion. "Und mit cannibals, und typhoons, maype, ve ain'd like to have a picnic all der vay. Dot's my thought. But vere you say sail, I sail."

"Poof! We'll take every precaution," Uncle George laughed, and clapped him on the back. And he laughed aloud, as excited over the prospect as any boy who is assured of his first peek over the horizon.

Nor was he to be dissuaded by Aunt Martha's exclamation of dismay when he reached home. She—the dear soul—adored the man; and aside from that little ejaculation, she had only one question to ask.

"Do you know much about this Captain Donovan?" she said.

"Why, little enough," he admitted. "However, that little is good. But even supposing I am wrong about the man, Captain Van Tassel sails the ship, and we pick the crew. What could he do?"

"Nothing, I suppose," she said. "Well, I suppose I'll have to let you go, or you'll explode."

There was much to do before we could up-anchor. Uncle George had decided to use the *Anthony Wayne*, she being the fastest and the roomiest vessel in his fleet; but before she could put to sea again she had to be careened, scraped and repainted. We also shipped four more long nines and strengthened the bulwarks. Too, there was the forecastle to be enlarged, as we wanted between twenty-five and thirty men forward, to deal with strange natives, if needs be; and since it was decided that the after party would include the skipper, the mate, my uncle, the judge, Captain Donovan, myself, three negro servants, and Johannsen, our quartermaster, preparations had to be made for their housing. And there were also supplies to be shipped for a voyage of many months.

Added to this was Captain Van Tassel's problem in shipping his crew. The Horn is enough to cause the staunchest sailor a qualm or two, and of our old hands only Johannsen, the quartermaster, O'Donnel, the bos'n, Anthony Buzzel, the coxswain, and Walter Killifer, able seaman, signified intention of signing on. Like Barnaby Horn, the others took their share of the loot from the *Retriever*, and were off for a wild fling. Barnaby, it is true, spent his share in less than two weeks and was begging for a berth soon after; but the others had disappeared.

However, our mission was well advertised along the water front, and I suppose the time will never come when

hardy souls cannot be found to brave the Horn or any other danger for the sake of sharing in buried treasure. So it came about that Van Tassel received more applications than he needed and was picking and choosing to suit himself.

So, as the men were taken on from time to time, he gathered a sturdy crew about him—a hoarse-spoken, weather-beaten, scarred and tarry lot, with the marks of many a barroom brawl upon them, but capable, handy seamen.

DONOVAN, in the meantime, took little part in the reconditioning of the ship. For once he was to sail as a passenger. He told me that Captain Van Tassel might possibly feel a bit miffed, under his skin, and it was just as well to stay clear of him for the time being.

"Like any old skipper," he said, smiling, "I might forget myself and make suggestions. And he wouldn't like that. It ain't in human nature."

He even carried this attitude to the point of refusing to recommend seamen to Van Tassel.

I was seated with him one fine, sunshiny afternoon on the veranda of his inn—the George Washington, where few sea captains ever went—when three husky tars came rolling up the walk and paused deferentially near the veranda rail. One was a smiling young Irishman, another was a huge man with queer albino eyes, and the third a hairy, compact fellow, with jowls like a gorilla, and a swarthy, dished-in, broad-nosed face.

"Could I have a word with you, Cap'n Donovan?" said the latter worthy, taking a pace forward and pulling awkwardly at his forelock.

Captain Donovan eyed the man rather sternly. He had been given a thousand pounds for his share of the spoils, and he was now rigged out like an admiral.

"And what may you want, my man?" said he. To me, in an aside he added, "One of my old hands."

"Why, sir, we hears you're a-sailing for treasure somewheres," the man replied. "We're wanting to ship, d'y'see."

"Well, it ain't me as is a-sailin' this trip," Donovan replied. "It's this gentleman's uncle as is fitting out the ship, and her cap'n's name is Van Tassel. Now, lessee—your name's Martin, ain't it?"

"Ay, sir. I was afore the mast under you on the old *Weymouth*, years ago."

"I remember," said Donovan. "Well, now, Martin, you'll have to pass inspection afore Cap'n Van Tassel on your own account. He's bein' careful about who he takes aboard, he is."

"But I thought, sir, as a word from you——"

"Not a word, unless he asks it," snapped Donovan. "You go to him, if you wants, and if he takes you on your own say so, well and good. If he wants a word about you, why, I'll give it. But only in case, you mind."

The man saluted, and the three rolled away.

"Good men, all three," said Donovan, then. "Martin looks rough, but he's an honest man, and there ain't no better seaman. Dumphe and Fallon's good hands, too—Fallon's the one with the gold in his teeth and the smile."

"Why not take them to the skipper, then?" I said.

"Well, now," Donovan returned, looking at me sideways, with a shrewd smile lighting his big, eloquent features, "if skipper is miffed, would he be like to take them men on my direct put-in? Not him. They need the duff, I shouldn't wonder, so I'm not for spoilin' their chances."

Just then young Jenkins came up the walk, met the three sailors, and stopped to chat with them. Shortly afterward, he joined us, at Donovan's cheery hail. I could hardly hide my amusement when I noted Jenkins' radiant smile; for he was such an admirer of Donovan's that he almost ran to us, like a dog to the whistle. His adoration was written all over his smooth, virile features. He had come to the point where, all unconsciously, he was imitating the giant's very tones, and every now and then was wont to cry, "Ay, by the Flying Dutchman!" in laying stress to his remarks.

"So you knows them swabs, eh?" said Donovan, as they disappeared into a sailor's grog shop farther down, and on the opposite side of the street.

"Why, yes," said Jenkins, quickly.

The key to one million pounds.

"That is, I know they're good seamen, and honest. Sailed with them before I got my ticket. They asked me just now if I knew anything about this treasure trip, and when I told them I'm mate aboard, they asked for a billet. I'm going to give 'em a recommend to the skipper this afternoon."

"Well, that's fine," commented Donovan next day, when we noted the three men working aboard the *Anthony Wayne*. "Let me out of it slick, too."

Meanwhile I spent the greater part of my time aboard the *Anthony Wayne*, counting the days until we were ready to go, and intensely interested in everything that was going on aboard her. At last the supplies were stowed away, the vessel was ready, and we were summoned to go on board, thirty-six men all told. I remember well how I thrilled when the great white sails were broken out, and the anchor came up, and we stood on the clean, white deck to wave good-by to the crowds on shore. We were off to our great adventure at last.

CHAPTER VI

WE SIGHT THE ISLAND

WHAT a journey that was! From the very first it appeared that fortune intended to smile on our venture, for we enjoyed the steadiest of refreshing breezes throughout, accompanied with the balmiest of weather, save when rounding the Horn.

Everyone was comfortable aboard. The enlarging of the after cabin made room for the construction of six snug staterooms, three on each side, leaving the middle space clear for use as a dining and lounging room. There was ample room for a broad oaken table, several comfortable chairs, and a cushioned settee under the stern ports in the space aft of the lower companionway; and there was also a lazaret, where Sam, my uncle's body servant, was wont to display his skill at mixing toddies, and a little chart-room on the port side, forward, built especially for the skipper. The whole had been tinted in green and white, and was very cheerful in aspect. And the men forward were enjoying far greater space than might have been allotted them on an ordinary voyage.

Though my uncle was aboard, there was but one captain. He—my uncle, that is—never so much as gave an order from the time we brought up the anchor to the day we dropped it again in Drake's Bay. Dirk Van Tassel was supreme on his own quarter-deck, and he maintained discipline as strict as that on a man-o'-war. Woe to the shirker who tried to take advantage of the fact that there were double the men ordinarily employed aboard! The brass work might have been used for mirrors by a primping belle; the decks were holystoned until they were as clean as driven snow. There was seldom a minute when those on watch were not kept busy.

On those who disagreed with this program the captain's hand fell heavily. But, on the whole, there were very few incidents of this sort. This, I think, was due to the example of the man Fallon. He appeared to be a jewel. With his black, impish Celtic features, his merry blue eyes, and his flashing, golden smile, he was very popular with the men; and he was ever ready to spring forward to the head of the line when a haul on a rope was needed, and forever breaking out into a cheery, rollicking chanty. As for his chum, Martin, that worthy remained the same gruff, lowering gorilla of my first encounter; but he, too, was prompt and willing and quickly proved that he knew his work from stem to stern.

"I should think you might have recommended them!" I remarked one day to Donovan. "There are no more able seamen aboard."

"Right you are!" Donovan declared. "And have you noted Dumphey?"

I nodded, for the man's peculiar appearance would have attracted attention anywhere. He was a blond giant, with a great, round, moon-like face, flat and sallow. He had scarcely any brows over his slanting, albino eyes, and his features, in repose, had something about them that suggested the Mongolian. Yet when you spoke to him, he was smiling on the instant; and he performed his duties with exceptional skill.

"A good man," I said; and later I heard Captain Van Tassel speaking of them to the mate.

"Bedder as some I bicked mineselluf," he grunted.

In the after cabin the feeling was excellent—with the possible exception of that between Donovan and the skipper. This never cropped above the surface, but was manifested almost imperceptibly. If Donovan spoke to him, the captain always replied very courteously—a little too courteously, if anything. He was impersonal in his expression when looking at Donovan—so impersonal, in fact, that I sensed a marked animosity which he was holding in check for the sake of peace in the party.

Donovan did not allow this to ruffle his good spirits in the least. He had an inimitable way of telling a story, with eloquent grimaces and a slap of his knee at the climax which set my uncle roaring with laughter and the judge to chuckling till his fat stomach shook. It was something to see the three of them sitting at the table, with the brass lamp swinging, and the moon shining on the ship's rippling wake, and my uncle holding his toddy suspended when Donovan approached a side-splitting end to his yarn. Even the skipper would forget to smoke on these occasions, as he sat back, listening; he would hold his pipe in one hand, leaning a bit forward, and watching Donovan intently; and then, when the laugh was at its height, and he thought no one was watching him, he would clap his pipe back in his mouth, and eye Donovan through the drifting smoke with a puzzled little frown.

"He's the best companion I've had on a voyage!" my uncle exclaimed one day. "Even including yourself, Judge." And the judge chuckled, adding a word of praise for the man on his own account.

"Of course," Uncle George went on, "I don't know the man from a ton of coal. But I can't see but what he's trustworthy, all through." And he shook his head. "I sense," he continued, "that Van Tassel doesn't like the man, though he never says a word. However, that's to be expected, I suppose. He rather—he, he!—took the feathers out of poor old Dirk's cap on his own quarter-deck, and that would stick even in my crop, I'll admit."

In truth, I believed, on my own account, that the skipper was being rather small in the matter, and that his attitude toward Donovan was absurd and even childish. The giant never so much as stepped forward of the waist; nor did he speak to any member of the crew, that I could see, save in the presence of one of us, and then only casually, in answering a question. Now and again he would go on the poop, when the mate was on watch; but none of us thought anything of this at the time, for Jenkins' admiration for the man was so manifest that all noted it.

"A good boy," said my uncle, "and has been in my service—let's see, now

—yes, three years. Another three years, or so, and he shall have a ship. Glad he likes Donovan—he can learn something from him, I have no doubt."

Meantime the *Anthony Wayne* sailed like a witch, answering the helm like a mettlesome horse responding to the spur; and at last, after a long voyage in which nothing untoward occurred, we were brought out on deck one clear, sunny day by the cheery cry from the lookout aloft: "Land, ho!"

AS WE came in closer, from northward, and the sunkissed hills rose above the horizon, we were given a rather unfavorable impression of the island. London Tower, the highest hill, with Kidd's Mauley, the next highest, were first to be sighted. London Tower rose clear above the trees upon its lower slopes, a great spire of jagged, naked, white and yellow rock. Kidd's Mauley seemed to have no vegetation whatever, save in isolated patches, around the base, and was an ugly mass of corrugated granite slabs, resembling a clenched fist holding aloft the broken blade of a dagger. But Execution Knob, Binnacle Hill and Bowsprit Bluff were surmounted with tall, stately pines; and when we came closer still and steered a course which took us past Dead Man's Locker and down the eastern coast of the peninsula, Blackbeard's Boot, we were transported with delight.

Never have I looked on a more entrancing terrain. The broad, low, gently-sloping sandy beach beyond the white coral reefs looked like a boulevard paved with gold. Millions of highly-colored sea-shells lay in a long, sinuous ridge at the last high-tide mark, and the smooth wet strip between this ridge and the water was peppered with them. Long-legged cranes, with bright, green feathers, and great red bills, hopped here and there, looking at us curiously, or unconcernedly digging for clams; while at other places we saw great monstrous turtles waddling awkwardly down to the sea. At the inner edge of the beach there rose a fringe of coconut palms, sometimes thinning out to a single row, sometimes thickening into compact groves. Interstudded with them were mango trees, and short, dwarfed, gnarled yellow oaks; and behind them, on the footslopes, were thick growths of palms, mahogany, ebony, and other trees, with thick moss hanging from them, and a profligate growth of foliage displaying every color in the rainbow.

I had never seen such brilliant reds, such flashing tints of green, such glaring patches of yellow, nor such deep shades of purple. Kissed by the golden sunlight, the whole shore line made a delightful picture for men long at sea to look upon; while the high undulating ridge behind this wondrous growth was thickly overgrown with stately pines.

"The Devil's Caldron?" cried my uncle. "Why, had those pirates none but sinister thought on all occasions? The place might well have been called Paradise Island."

Old Barnaby, who overheard this, cackled hoarsely. He had only recently emerged from the brig, after draining the alcohol from some shellac.

"I'll tell better after I'm ashore," he remarked, *sotto voce*. "If the sap's runnin' good in them coconut trees, I knows a way to get good liquor. You cuts the shoots, hangs a bucket under, and let's the sap ferment three days."

CHAPTER VII

UNBURIED BONES

THE light breeze holding, we rounded the southern end of Blackbeard's Boot, and stood in between it and Kidd's Mauley for the anchorage to northward. Everywhere we found the chart to be accurate; though, for that matter, there was scarce need for the lead. It was like sailing on air, the water was so smooth and transparent, and, though the bottom lay at over twenty-five fathoms in many places, we could always see it as clearly as though looking down at it through a clean skylight.

The anchorage was even more charming than the country on the eastern slopes of Blackbeard's Boot. There were broad, gently sloping strips of sand on either side, with an even more abundant growth of beautiful palms and foliage beyond them, and all tinted with gaudy colors. The western slope of Blackbeard's Boot was more precipitate than that on the opposite side; but, save for one knoll, the mainland skirting Drake's Bay rose very gradually to the foot of the big plateau. There were many open places in the terrain in that part of the island. Some resembled the green meadows of the colonies, while others were covered with a thick growth of tough, yellow grass. But the growth of trees predominated here, as it did on the steep slopes of the plateau.

The air was filled with the fragrant odors from the foliage; and, though it was after four o'clock, or eight bells, when we dropped anchor, my uncle delighted me by announcing that he would take the cabin party ashore to "stretch a leg," as he put it. Then, as he saw the men looking longingly shoreward, he looked appealingly at Captain Van Tassel.

"We can't start out ship-shape for the treasure until tomorrow morning —or at any rate, there's no need to," said Uncle George. "So, if it won't interfere with discipline——"

"Ve let 'em go ashore to sphend the night, vot?" said the captain, grinning a little. "All, say, but maype two, vor a vatch."

"Right," said my uncle. "Let 'em have three kegs of ale, and a lunch."

The men were piped up at once, and they received the news with a cheer. It required no prodding to set them bustling in preparation for the picnic.

Meantime, as our own gig was lowered away, I caught a glimpse of the mate, Jenkins. He was looking rather pale and worried.

"What's the matter, are you sick?" I asked.

He seemed to start a little as I spoke, and avoided my eyes. But at once he pointed down over the rail into the water. Following his pointing finger, I saw a great green shark swimming lazily within a few feet of the surface. Smaller fishes were scurrying away from him; but, farther down, where long seaweeds, with fat, yellow, circular stems and bulbs like gourds on the end, were wafting about on the bottom, I saw an octopus. And near him I discerned three skeletons.

"Human!" said Jenkins. "They give me a kind of a turn."

"The niggers!" I exclaimed—and called my uncle's attention to them.

Now, at the time, I thought little of Jenkins' statement, since many a more hardened man than he has been affected by similar sights. It was only later that I remembered a little look that Donovan gave him. My uncle taking Donovan's arm and beckoning me to follow, I forgot about the matter almost at once.

"You are coming with us, aren't you, Captain?" said my uncle.

"No, sir," the skipper replied. "I half some vork—also I safe mineselluf for der climb tomorrow." And he nodded at the steep sides of the distant plateau. "Mr. Jenkins," he added, "you vill half to shtay abort tomorrow, so you go now."

Jenkins seemed to hesitate a little before answering. But, remembering himself, he said, "Very well, sir," and moved to join us.

WE WERE no sooner ashore than Donovan gave a cry and pointed down the beach. There lay another skeleton. Approaching it, we saw rotten bits of rope still fastened about the wrist bones, which had been drawn behind the back.

"One of them niggers that walked the plank," said Donovan. "Washed up by the tide, and left for the birds, by the Flying Dutchman!"

"Poor devil!" said Uncle George. "Well, we'll bury him, anyway."

Forthwith we kicked sand over the partially covered bones, and went on. Jenkins and Donovan paired off shortly, as did the judge and my uncle, while I busied myself digging for turtle's eggs, examining the quaint shells and climbing mango trees for some of the luscious fruit. And so, being preoccupied, the time slipped by rapidly; and finally, after pausing to pelt rocks at a great crocodile on a rotting log, I rounded a spit not far to southward of the river's mouth just as it was growing dusk. There I came upon a gruesome sight which brought me up short.

High up in the sands, and in a sort of circular pit, lay the blackened embers of a great fire. How recent it had been I could not tell. But there were hundreds of blurred footprints about, with one great beaten path running in a circle around the pit—a trough, one might say, churned out by stamping feet in a horrid dance. A broken war-club, with ugly knobs, lay close by, while not far from it were a long flint spearhead and a cracked bow. With them, scattered carelessly about the place, were at least four human skulls and a litter of human bones.

My shout brought my uncle up on a dog trot, the judge following at a more sedate pace. Donovan and young Jenkins, halting in the distance, began to retrace their steps, while three of the seamen nearby also moved to join us.

"Cannibals," said my uncle, at once, with a shudder of revulsion.

"Might be slaughter for some sort of weird ceremony," the judge commented. Then, as Donovan came up, he asked, "What do you make of it, Captain Donovan?"

"Why," said the giant, with a wry grimace, "it looks to me as though there's some as has stronger stomachs than mine, by the Flying Dutchman!"

"Cannibals," my uncle repeated. Looking round about him curiously, he added, "I'm fairly sure, though, the island isn't inhabited."

The three seamen coming up just then, they paused, with an appearance of nausea and horror; and, as Donovan replied, "Why, that swab McCallum said there weren't sign o' life here," the men looked round about apprehensively.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said one—a man named Ayotte—"but we'd be in a tight hole, I'm thinking, if there was such swabs loose around here."

"Tush!" cried my uncle, at once seeing where the wind lay. "They'd probably run from firearms like sheep. Anyway, we didn't see a sign of life all the way down the east coast, and I don't believe there are any savages here. It's my opinion they bring their prisoners from some other island for these—er—ceremonies."

Of course none of the seamen openly contradicted my uncle; but as others of the crew came trooping up, it was plain to be seen that they were strongly affected. Then, to add to the depression, one of them cried out excitedly, and pointed upward. We had all been standing, with our eyes held on the horror, as though by some devilish magnet; but now, looking up, we all exclaimed simultaneously.

A SWARM — an army — a veritable host of huge bats was circling over our heads. Literally millions of them filled the air, flying no more than three or four feet apart; and as far as we could see to north and south the sky was dark with them, flying slothfully down from the plateau and the towering peaks. Their bodies were as large as that of a small dog; the wingspread was that of an eagle; and, as they flew just over the tree-tops, we could see their heads, shaped somewhat like that of a calf, and their rows of sharp little white teeth as they looked down at us and bared their gums.

"It's a judgment!" wailed Harry Newell, one of the young hands aboard, flinging himself prone. "It's come upon us for seekin' money touched with blood."

Some of the others were visibly shaken; they huddled closer together, pale and nervous.

"Ay!" Horn echoed Newell. "It's the end of us, and no mistake."

"Poof!" snorted the judge contemptuously. "They're nothing but big bats, as harmless as the smaller breed if let alone. Doubtless they burrow in the cliffs up there by day and come down at night to feed on tender shoots along the coast."

"Right you are!" Donovan boomed out, with a hearty chuckle. "Get back to your pins, there, my lad," he said to Newell. "What kind of seamanly behavior is that? Well, now, men, you see what it is to be eddicated. But I've seen the same thing myself in the tropics. They're no more harm than fleas—at least out here."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I'd ruther have the fleas," said Fallon, with a lugubrious grin.

This provoked a little laugh, but it was short-lived. Though some of the older hands said they had seen bats of this size before now, and the repulsive animals settled quietly in the treetops with no effort to attack us, most of the men were still uneasy. Those grinning teeth suggested the larger molars which the men believed had stripped the human bones at their feet; and the whole took a morbid grip on their imaginations.

"Think you'd better order them back aboard?" the judge suggested, drawing my uncle aside.

"No," said Uncle George. "I don't believe there are any natives living here. If I order the men aboard, why, they'll only be that much more afraid of tackling the interior. And I tell you I'm going to have that treasure, cannibals or no cannibals, come hell or high water."

Forthwith he told Mr. Jenkins to pipe up three of the men to get shovels and bury the bones.

"That'll help to quiet the superstitious who believe all unburied dead walk," he said, in an aside to me.

Then, as darkness swooped down upon us, he moved back with the men to the fire which their comrades had kindled. Thereupon he explained that a lookout of two armed men would be

rowed back to Kidd's Mauley, with orders to fire from the peak as a warning if any canoes were sighted; and, pointing out that there was no reason to believe that the island was inhabited, not a sign of smoke or movement having been seen when we approached it, he advised them to enjoy their outing without fear.

"I'll send out muskets for two to stand guard, if you like," he said, "and the rest of you have pistols."

This cheered the men visibly. With but five exceptions, all elected to remain ashore. And, what rather amazed me, Fallon, Martin and Dumphey were among these five—young Newell and a youth named Johnston making up the remaining two.

"If it's the same to you, sir, I'll go aboard," said Fallon. "Them bats, I think it were, has turned me stomach."

"I couldn't even drink ale with the thought of them bones," said Dumphey.

"Here too," growled Martin.

Their departure was greeted with jeers by the others, as might have been expected. "So much more ale though, for the rest of us," one shouted. But Fallon, the glib-tongued Celt, for once had no response.

"Why," I whispered to Donovan, "I'd never have picked those three to be squeamish."

"Ah!" said Donovan. "That's a funny thing, now. Maybe you wouldn't believe it, but I tell you if one of them bats flew down and touched me, even, I'd be heaving Jonah for a week."

CHAPTER VIII

DONOVAN STAYS ABOARD

EVERAL events occurred that night which we had cause to remember later, but which did not —with but one exception, and this for a short time only—appear of any great importance at the time.

It was a little after five bells—half-past ten—and Uncle George, the judge, the skipper, Donovan and I were sitting on the poop, talking over the morrow's trip, when suddenly there was a thunderous report ashore, and the figures round the red blaze broke off in their singing and leaped to their feet. For a moment pandemonium held sway; some running to the boats, others discharging their pistols into the brush, and all yelling excitedly.

"Cannibals!" I gasped, my heart sinking into my boots, so to speak.

"My God!" Uncle George cried. "What a fool I was."

"Vun minute!" snorted Captain Van Tassel. He strode to the rail, lifted his voice, and bellowed, "Sing oudt, you lubbers. Vot in hell is der madder?"

"Something in the brush, sir!" a voice answered, coming clearly across the still water.

Just then another voice in the brush rose above all the rest. "Stop that

Some held the snake aloft

shooting, you lubbers! I've killed it. It's a snake."

The captain sat down, chuckling; the cries ashore changed to shouts of laughter; then, as men ran into the brush with torches from the fire, the laughter changed to cries of amazement. A few minutes later one came running down to the shore to shout that they had killed a snake fifty feet long!

"Vell," roared the captain, "enuff is enuff. You best bring him aboard before you shooit der island full of holes."

The gigs came alongside not long afterward, with some of the men holding the dead snake aloft for our inspection. In the torch light it appeared truly monstrous. By actual measurement it was twenty-seven feet in length, and weighed two hundred and eight pounds. When cut open it disgorged a partially digested wild pig.

"I were on guard, sir," a seaman named Nutter explained. "Getting tired, I moved about a little, and what did I step on, behind a bush, but this, all coiled up. Snoozing away, he were, and digesting this here pig—though wot he had in his belly I didn't stop to think at the time, not me. And lucky for me the moon was up. Anyway, I just up and lets him have it through the head."

"And lucky for you that type doesn't uncoil rapidly, once asleep," said the judge. "It's a constrictor—a rock python, I'd say."

This exciting and unusual adventure not only brought all but the sentries on Kidd's Mauley aboard, but kept us up for another two hours discussing snakes, while the men finished their ale on the fo'c'sle deck. But finally I turned in; and then, an hour or so later, being unable to sleep for the maudlin singing going on forward, I got up and took a turn about in the waist. Dumphey and Martin were seated on a crate beside the bulwarks, drinking from a pannikin.

"Ay, and we might as well have had a real bellyful of this!" Dumphey, not hearing me, growled to Martin, as I approached.

But Martin, seeing me, made a little clucking noise with his tongue, and they were silent until I returned to the poop.

Donovan was still there, and talking to the mate. As I came up, the giant rose, yawned, and bade us good night. A moment later we heard a crash in the companionway, and, running down, we found Donovan sitting upon the cabin floor. He was nursing his right ankle in his hand and swearing frightfully under his breath.

"Stumbled on the companion," he growled. "It's that there weak ankle of mine. Flop one once, and there's allus trouble with it."

We assisted him to his feet and into his little stateroom. He winced a little with every step, but when Uncle George thrust his head out and was told of the fall, Donovan waved offers of further assistance aside.

"Tush—I'm not a baby!" he growled. "If you, Mr. Jenkins, would just get me a little liniment and a rag, I'll be right as rain come morning."

Expressing a hope that he would find the sprain only a minor one, my uncle and I then retired, leaving Jenkins to minister to him; but, when we arose in the morning, Donovan hobbled out with his ankle heavily bandaged and announced ruefully that we must go treasure-hunting without him.

"I rate a nurse," he growled, disgustedly.

Of course we commiserated with him; but there was nothing to do but leave him aboard ship, so we went on with our preparations.

Uncle George and the captain hold-

ing a council immediately after our early breakfast, it was decided to leave at least ten men aboard ship, as a precaution in case war canoes appeared at the mouth of the bay. With two sentries to be maintained on Kidd's Mauley, from which peak they could look far to seaward, it was thought that we had taken ample measures for protection. Even if war canoes could paddle up the bay before the land party returned, the ten men left aboard, we were sure, could hold the ship in the interim. The long nines, loaded with a double charge of round shot and slugs, would sink any canoe ever built, and with but a single shot.

Johannsen, the quartermaster; Le Blanc, the cook; young McNulty, cookee; Byther, the carpenter; and Dumphey, sailmaker, were told off by Captain Van Tassel as part of the crew to remain aboard; Jenkins was then instructed to pick the others from his own watch. He named Fallon and Martin, for the first two, and took Killifer and Gunderson to make up the list.

"That'll be ten, with myself, sir," he said. "And two on Kidd's Mauley is twelve."

"Hold on," said Donovan, with a queer grin. "With me, that's thirteen."

"Vell, den," said Captain Van Tassel, with a little smile, "you pick vun more, Mr. Jenkins."

Young Newell looking at Jenkins beseechingly at the moment, the mate smiled and nodded at him. Thus we set out with a party of twenty-two.

Rowing straight ashore, we left the gigs to be returned to the ship and proceeded straight inland. This, we reasoned, would save time, inasmuch as the cache lay south of west from our anchorage and rowing up the river would have taken us to the northwest, with a forced stop below the waterfall and a long march to follow.

WE WALKED at a leisurely pace, for arms had been served out, and each man carried a musket, two pistols, a cutlas, and powder horn and shot. Every member of the party was also burdened with a small haversack, in which had been placed three days rations—cheese, raisins, ships' biscuit, jerked beef and salt fish—while the men from the crew carried shovels and picks besides.

And what a wonder trip that was! Not a man seemed to mind his burden, though the sun rose higher and hotter with each passing minute; not a man but found something new to exclaim over and marvel at with every step. Great lizards scampered away from underfoot; twice we sighted crocodiles sunning themselves at the edge of the little swamps; monkeys chattered at us from every treetop; and great birds, some with red and some with green bills, screamed at us with raucous, ear-splitting cries. Once, a long way off, we sighted a small deer, much smaller than our own American species; while on another occasion a drove of wild hogs, with long curved tusks, charged out of a growth of thick yellow grass and galloped away into the jungle. Then, too, we saw black beetles, as long as a man's hand, and paused once to watch a terrific battle between an army of black ants and a fierce horde of their red species. The latter, though much the smaller, seemed to be forging toward victory, as they fought in groups, with every appearance of organization.

The nature of the country, however, amazed us more than the animals and birds upon it. For example, the green patches we had supposed to be meadows turned out to be bodies of limpid water, with green reeds thrusting up above the surface. The water could not be seen through the thick growth until one approached close up. Also, as Uncle George led us forward, with chart and compass, we were forced to cut our way through, or turn aside from growths of heavy vines—some as thick as a man's arm, and some, when cut through, spouting a thick stream of cool, clear water.

"Nature providing water for these trees," explained the judge. "It probably doesn't rain here for six months at a stretch. Note how these water vines trend upward toward the river, above the falls, or the lake."

There was not a sign of any path, nor any other trace of human habitation. In fact, as we pressed westward the growth of vines became thicker. Near the bay, where the soil was sandy, we had found many open spaces; on the rising ground near the foot of the plateau the soil was darker and much more fertile. The foliage of the trees was so thick overhead here that we worked under a canopy in a cool twilight.

And now, as we began to mount the steep sides of the plateau, we noted other odd freaks of nature. The great tableland seemed to be formed, for the most part, from a volcanic upheaval of coral rock; and the black soil lay only in patches and was not over a foot in depth at any place. Yet trees one hundred feet in height were reared on this surface. They maintained their precarious grip and balance by spreading out their roots, flatwise, along the surface, in radial projections; nor did they pause with this. Their limbs reached out to take grips on other trees, or, turning downward, spread out roots of their own on the ground to aid the mother tree. And many of the gigantic trunks had no outshoots whatever for a full seventy-five feet above ground. Many of these bare trunks had no bark, and were so badly worm-eaten they reminded me of the Egyptian obelisks, illustrated in my schoolbooks; but, like all the others, their limbs shot out in all directions from the top and were so thick with green foliage that we could not see the sun.

"We've gained one thing, anyway," my uncle said once, with a laugh.

"And what's that?" the judge panted, mopping his red face.

"Why, when we get home and tell what we've seen, we'll be rated the biggest liars in the country. And that's worth something, even if we don't find a dollar."

The ascent was difficult in many places where we had to scramble for footholds, so we made frequent pauses to rest our hands. O'Donnell, the grizzled bos'n, spoke up at one of these rest periods, declaring that he had come to the point where the felt sorry for the negro slaves who had lugged the treasure to the top.

"Why, that's funny, now," old Barnaby Horn commented. "If they went aloft here, they must 'a' cut a path somewheres."

"Grown over in a month in the tropics," said the judge.

By the time we reached the top our shirts were stained with white salt patches from the perspiration. It was then after six bells, or eleven o'clock. A stately group of pines, with moss and needles under them, offered a shady spot for the wearied hands, and we stopped for lunch.

It was an enchanting spot in which we sprawled. A cool, refreshing breeze stirred the treetops; and from where we lay we could see the surf beating on the coral reefs at the outer edges of Morgan's Bay, and, through gaps in the treetops, the tall masts of the *Anthony Wayne*, lying far below

us. In our immediate foreground was a rolling terrain, covered with patches of yellow grass, jutting outcrops of coral and occasional gnarled shrubs. This stretched to the trees surrounding the rim of the Devil's Caldron, over a mile from us; while beyond it, to northward, there rose the jagged heights of London Tower. Execution Knob rose just to the west of us, less than a half mile distant.

Among other things, we had been remarking the ease with which sound carried on the island, and suddenly we were given further proof of it. All heard the faint report of a gun from the direction of Drake's Bay, followed by a second and third shot, almost immediately after.

Everyone jumped to his feet.

"Kidd's Mauley?" cried the judge.

"No," said Captain Van Tassel, raising his glass, and leveling it toward the peak in question. "No smoke dere. Anyway, see for yourselluf. Dere's no canoes in sight." He handed the glass to one of the men, then. "Get aloft in dot pine," he said, "und see vot you see."

The nimble sailor made the climb in a brace of shakes.

"Boat comin' ashore, sir," he sang out a moment later. "Looks to be three or four in it. Can't tell who they is."

"Any mofement abort?" cried the captain.

"Can't see anything unusual, sir. Looks like there's some standing at the bulwarks, that's all."

No canoes being reported in sight, and no further shots sounding, it was decided that some of the men might have been sent ashore to try a shot at a deer or wild hog. The sailor aloft said that the boat disappeared behind a spit; whereupon the captain ordered him to come down, and, shortly afterward, we took up the march for the cache.

CHAPTER IX

FALSE BEARINGS

T WAS I who first sighted the cave. Exactly as it was marked on the chart, there it lay, in between two outjutting spurs, in the footslopes on the northern side of Execution Knob. In the distance its black open mouth looked like the hollow eye of a skull.

"Well," cried my uncle, excitedly, when we had hurried to it, "now for the compass and the bald rock!"

"Bald rock?" cried the judge. "Why, look—there's four of them I can see, at least, between here and the lake."

We waited impatiently for the needle to stop swinging. When it paused at last, my uncle dropped to the ground behind it, the better to take his bearing.

"Hell!" he exclaimed, in an irritated tone. "Too much grass ahead of me. Anyway, it doesn't point to any of the rocks, I see."

"The northeast corner of the cave," said the judge, reading from the chart. "You're in the right position."

"One minute," said Uncle George. "Stand back, men. Maybe there's too much iron near the needle."

The needle did swing a point when we moved back, he declared; but still no one of the rocks was in line. Nor did the compass vary when we made a pile of haversacks, to raise the instrument, and make more accurate sighting possible.

"The nearest bald rock is five points off!" Uncle George declared, perplexedly.

"Vell," the skipper suggested quietly. "maype his gompass vas off a leedle—Cherry Plunt's, I mean."

"That's possible, too!" Uncle George responded, hopefully. "Well, now, we'll try that rock."

Forthwith a seaman was sent out to act as marker, and Uncle George took bearing to place him on a line running due northwest from the northeastern corner of the cavern. Captain Van Tassel and the judge, meantime, proceeded to the bald rock with another compass.

The rock lay about four hundred yards from the cave. To westward, and running from north to south, was a ridge of coral rock, bare of vegetation. This appeared to be equi-distant from the cave and the rock, and it was at least seventy-five yards wide.

Uncle George looked at it dubiously. Watching the man move back on the line in answer to the skipper's calls, his face fell.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's going to bring him smack on that ridge!"

And so it proved. Sight as they would, the intersection of the lines placed the marker on the ridge, and far back from its eastern edge. Nor were the results any better with the next nearest rock—which was fully ten points off the magnetic north line mentioned on the chart.

Gloomily we trooped over the ridge. No one seemed to want to speak the thoughts in his mind. One swung a pick and struck the surface of the rough ridge—a surface which seemed to be made up of white granules, glued together by some cement unknown to man. One might as well have picked at a granite slab.

Presently my uncle coughed and cleared his throat. His shoulders went back, and he cast a fiery glance in the direction of the ship.

"Well, men," he said, "I've been had. No fool would bury treasure there, even with nigger labor—it would have taken weeks with picks, and Lord knows how much drilling and powder. Besides, there's not a sign of a loose rock here to show a filled-in hole."

"I said the lower part of that paper had been cut away," said the judge, nodding at the chart.

"Easy enough to say 'I told you so,'" Uncle George growled. "There's treasure here, though, I believe, and that man Donovan knows where it is." Here he looked quizzically at the skipper, with a half angry, half apologetic light in his eyes. "Come on, now; have your say, Captain. Did you suspect something like this?"

"Vell," said the skipper, slowly, eyeing the pipe which he was filling, "if you ask me do I exspecgt somedings wrong, jess. Somehow I feel it. Only, I haf no broof, und so! Besites, if I say somedings eferyone t'inks I'm sore."

"Very true," Uncle George admitted. "Well, sir, you're captain; what now?"

"Back," said the skipper, nodding toward Drake's Bay. "Den ve see."

We made the trip back to the bottom of the plateau in far less time than we had consumed mounting it. And at the base we met the quartermaster, Johannsen, with the seamen, Killifer and Gunderson. They had had little trouble in following our broad trail.

HE quartermaster's broad, leathery features were aflame with indignation. A Viking in size, he raised a tattooed forearm as thick as the limb of an oak, and shook his great fist in the direction of the *Anthony Wayne*.

"All I ask," he bellowed, for a beginning, "is one swipe at them swabs, so help me Davy Jones!"

"Come," said the skipper. "Vot iss it yet?"

"Why," roared the quartermaster, "they took the ship. Donovan, I mean, and that Jenkins, and the others."

The story was soon told. The mate had placed Johannsen in charge of filling the ship's water casks from the river—a clear, sparkling stream above the mouth—and he, with Killifer, Gunderson and young Newell, had been rowing back and forth in one of the gigs throughout the greater part of the morning.

"On our last trip," Johannsen continued, "just as they slung up the last keg, why, this Donovan whips out a pistol, leans down over the bulwarks, and shoots young Newell through the head. 'Just to show you we mean business!'—that's what he says. At the same time there's Jenkins, Fallon, Dumphey and Martin a-leanin' over with pistols, too. 'One move,' says Donovan, cool as ice, 'and your goose is cooked.' What could we do but sit there like so many fish? Well, just then the cookee, McNulty, he slings a knife, but Fallon gives him both barrels. 'That's two dead,' says Donovan, never battin' an eye. Bither and the cook, d'y'mind, came runnin' on deck, but when they sees the lay of the land, they stops dead. And then Donovan tells us wot's wot."

"Vell?" prompted the skipper, his face grim and pale.

"Why," said Johannsen, "here's what he says: 'Come aboard,' he says, 'and join us, as has the food, the ship, and knows where the treasure is. Or else,' he says, 'you can go ashore, and give my compliments,' he says, 'to that there square-head, your capting, and tell him what's what. And that's this,' he says. 'All hands what want to join Cap'n Donovan is free to do so and share food and treasure. Them that won't can eat coconuts. As for the treasure, I'll talk to your capting soon as he shows a flag o' truce.'"

Then, explained Johannsen, they had been allowed to row ashore, with the warning that they would be given but one minute to get out of gunshot after they had beached. Fallon and Martin came with them, keeping them covered with pistols, and returned to the ship later with the gig.

"I put you in der log for t'ree honest men!" cried Van Tassel, with unwonted warmth.

"And I won't forget it if we get out of this!" Uncle George declared, shaking each man by the hand. "Now, by the Lord Harry, let's see what he has to propose."

RUDGING onward again toward Drake's Bay, with the men growling behind us, we reviewed the situation. It was now plain that Donovan had withheld the chart from me, in the first place, to obtain an opportunity to insert his own markings, after cutting off the original notations by Jerry Blunt. At the outset, we reasoned, he may merely have intended to safeguard his own interests in bargaining for a ship. But later, having sounded out the impressionable Jenkins thoroughly, he had worked out a bolder scheme. We knew now that the mate had succeeded in getting at least three accomplices aboard—Fallon, Dumphey and Martin—and had but to wait for a favorable opportunity to seize the ship.

"Why, they would probably have taken her last night, while we slept, if the men hadn't come aboard," said the judge.

Uncle George spat vindictively.

"Doubtless," he acknowledged. "Oh, I'm not so surprised now at Donovan, when I think it all over," he continued. "Though I'll admit he took me in, all over. But that mate—that Jenkins—" He choked, and sputtered. "To think I planned to give him a ship!"

Glancing at the captain just then, I saw tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Dot poy!" he muttered, wiping the tears away hastily, with a shamefaced air. "I—vy, I treat him like a son."

Coming out on the sandy beach at last, we saw that the *Anthony Wayne*, now lay broadside on to the shore. She had been anchored forward as well as aft, and her starboard guns were uncovered. With her graceful lines, and her white hull with its streak of red, and all reflected in the clear water beneath her, she was a picture to thrill the heart of any sailor; but now, instead of our own colors, an improvised Jolly Roger was floating from her peak.

A drunken chanty came to us across the waters, and as we drew nearer Fallon leaned over the bulwarks and tossed a bottle into the bay.

"How'd you like a mouthful o' that, honest men?" he shouted derisively.

No one answered him. But Captain Van Tassel, after a word or two with my uncle, fastened a handkerchief on a cutlas, and waved it.

The signal was answered promptly by Donovan, who had been sitting with Jenkins under an awning on the poop. Moving like a trained athlete—for of course he had not injured his ankle in the least—he ran down the gangplank, followed by Fallon and Bither, and put off in a gig.

"Vell," said the skipper, when the buccaneers had come within a few yards of shore, "vot do you brobose?"

Donovan, the scoundrel, eyed us with an insolent smile. He had wrapped a gaudy polka-dotted scarf around his head; a yellow sash, with two silver-mounted pistols thrust in it, girdled his waist; and if ever there

Donovan, the scoundrel, eyed us with an insolent smile.

lived a man better suited for his rôle, I have yet to encounter him. The giant was in his element. He appeared as happy as an actor who has taken the center of the stage; he seemed fairly to glow, as with a light from some powerful inner lamp.

"Propose?" he cried. "Well, now, Johannsen told you, I suppose?"

"He dit," the skipper grunted.

"Then I'll repeat it, just to be sure all hands got the word," said Donovan. "All them as is in the crew is free for to jine with Cap'n Gentry—which is me, and not Donovan, as I've been called. Free to jine and share, by the Flying Dutchman! I knows where the treasure is. As for the cabin party, you can all come aboard, unarmed, you can, and I'll put you ashore on the coast of Brazil. If you don't—why, you can live like Robinson Crusoe."

"Und subbose no more of der hants vill choine?"

"Why," Donovan—or Gentry—returned easily, "we ain't in no terrible hurry, we ain't. We'll leave'm to think it over. We ain't for killin' more'n we have to; you saw how we let them three go free. Point is, we need more hands. Meantime, us as has the ship, the supplies, and plenty water and liquor aboard—why, we'll stand by a while."

"Und how long?"

"Not too long, by the Flying Dutchman!" said Gentry. "If no one wants to jine, why, of course we couldn't get the treasure aboard. Come such a case, I'm off to the new colony in Botany Bay. I'll get hands, and you may lay to it. When we comes back, and the cannibals ain't got you, then you look out. Not a man'll get quarter."

Captain Van Tassel removed his pipe from his mouth and held it gripped in his right fist.

"Vell, now," he said, "shpeaking for der cabin party, you can go to hell."

"Me, too!" roared Johannsen.

"And me!" cried Killifer.

Several others growled low in their throats, and crowded nearer to the skipper. Some of the rest moved more slowly; but at the time no one of them declared his intention of accepting Gentry's offer.

"Ah, well," said Gentry, "we'll see what we'll see. Them as changes their mind can work round to the other side of this here bay, and I'll send a boat ashore. There's a ford further up the river, you'll find." Then, waving his hand at us, he ordered his men to pull back to the ship.

CHAPTER X

GENTRY'S STRENGTH GROWS

ANY remaining doubts about the seriousness of our position were now swept away. We had no boats; retaking the ship, therefore, seemed to be an impossibility. Even a strongly barricaded raft was out of the question. We had brought only two axes ashore with us and could not have constructed anything suitable even though we spent a week at it, for the guns would have swept our deck clean before we had fairly left the shore.

Meantime there was the problem of defence, as well as that of existence to solve—with one meal gone from our three-day's supply of accustomed diet, and the prospect of subsisting thereafter on coconuts, mangoes, wild hog, and deer. Too, we had a doubtful crew. One glance at the unsmiling features about us assured me that many of them would ultimately prefer the far-off risk of swinging from a gibbet to sharing our dubious lot.

We held a brief council, while the men moved apart and muttered in guarded talk.

"Id's der loss of tobacco and der t'ought of dem cannibals more as anything we haf to fear about der men," said the skipper.

Thereupon he declared that we must at once find a position where water was obtainable and which would combine some degree of comfort as well as the means of defense. Pointing southward, he announced that he had noted a cave, when entering the bay, which might suit our purpose admirably.

"I saw a prook running down, t'rough mine glasses," he said.

Forthwith he gave orders to move, and within a half hour we had reached it.

It needed but a glance to assure us that we could have found no better place for our immediate needs. The cavern was located in the face of a bluff, or promontory, about one hundred feet above the level of the bay, and midway between the river mouth and the footslopes of Kidd's Mauley. From its mouth one could obtain a fair view of the bay to northward, as well as the entrance, through which canoes might come. The approach to it was steep, and clear of trees for a hundred yards or more. And the interior was large enough to house a regiment in comfort, with a clean, sandy floor, a bubbling spring with a brook running from it, and, better still, a natural opening nearby in the roof to allow for the passage of smoke.

Once within, the skipper took immediate steps for the prevention of men deserting with their arms. The muskets, pistols and powder horns, as well as the cutlases, were placed in charge of Johannsen, who arranged them in neat rows. The men were given to understand that arms would be issued only to hunters, or in case of attack. The rations were also pooled and turned over to our three negro servants, who were to act as cooks, while my uncle and the judge were immediately despatched to try their luck in bagging a wild hog or deer. Another detail, meantime, was sent out to cut firewood and fell logs for a barricade, while the rest were sent out to make what progress they could before sundown in gathering mangoes and coconuts, and digging clams.

But even this activity did not serve to keep many of the men from brooding. When night fell, four of them failed to return. The acquisition of Gunderson, Johannsen and Killifer had raised our numbers to twenty-five, leaving seven on board ship, and two on Kidd's Mauley; now we were twenty-one to the buccaneers' thirteen. When a man was sent to hail the sentries on Kidd's Mauley, he was greeted with a musket shot, whereupon he promptly deserted us, raising the pirates' crew to fourteen, and reducing ours to twenty. Nor were the minor events of the evening designed to make our men happier.

We had brought but one large coffee pot ashore, with two frying pans; and the pot proved to be leaky. Uncle George and the judge also returned without any game. They had not sighted a deer; while the wild hogs scampered so swiftly, they said, that it was useless to fire. They declared that these hogs, like our domestic porkers, loved mud, and sought dense patches of grass which shielded the oozy bottom from the sun; they further pointed out that it would be quite possible to bag them by stationing the hunters at one end of a glade, with perhaps two others to charge in and rout the hogs out at a given signal; but this optimistic conjecture failed to arouse any enthusiasm. The men were in the dumps. They muttered and frowned, and were surly in their answers; and shortly after supper, when

the men were split up into little groups outside the cavern, talking matters over, two more slipped away into the darkness.

"Eighteen," said my uncle, when informed of this. "That gives them fifteen. Well, captain, I don't suppose it will do to make the doubtful ones prisoners."

"No. How could ve tell vich is vich —safe maype Johannsen und Killifer? Even Gunderson look like a t'undercloud. If ve make de rest prissoners, vell, dot's so many more enemies, und some might be frients und shtay, oderwise."

This seemed reasonable; for none could be expected to look cheerful under the conditions, and it was impossible to foretell the ultimate actions of each individual. Hence Uncle George had all hands piped up before him and made them a brief speech.

"I'll admit our chances look bad," he said. "We can live, I am sure; but when a ship will put in here I can't say. If worse comes to worse we may be here a year or—" He shrugged. "Our best chance," he went on, "is to waylay them and cut them off when they come ashore for that treasure. They will come, in time, I am sure; I think Gentry's talk of going to Botany Bay was sheer bluff. And I'll say this: now we're in this hole, all those who stay with us will receive treble the shares promised them, providing we recover the ship and treasure."

"Ah, but that's like promising the moon," Horn spoke up.

"Granted," returned my uncle. "It's for you to decide."

Of the whole crew only one had the courage and manhood to state his intentions openly. This was Gunderson. He rose, frowning, and said that, for his part, he intended to join Gentry.

"It ain't like mutiny," he cried, hoarsely. "I wouldn't go agin my dooty, not me. Not with half a chance to live. But this is different, this is."

"Spoken like a man!" cried my uncle. "I'll not try to hold you. You have one minute to get out of gunshot." Then, as Gunderson wheeled and hurried out of the cavern, Uncle George looked round about, eyeing one man after another. "Any more?" he cried. "Let's clear the air here. Decide now, once and for all."

Not a man answered; not a man stirred.

"Then I take it you're all to stay," said Uncle George. "Come, now, that's not so bad. Seventeen to their seventeen. If we hang out long enough, they're bound to try for that treasure—and then is our chance. If you've a mind to, we'll do them yet."

This seemed to buoy up the men for the time being; and on top of this Judge Pemberton revealed a side of his nature which I, for one, had never suspected. Talking to the cabin party, presumably, as we lay on the sand at on side of the fire, his slow, drawling tones had soon caught the attention of all. The man must have been aching in every joint; the climb to the plateau had all but finished him, I thought; yet here he was, recounting droll negro stories as though safe at home in his library, till the cavern rang with shouts of laughter.

It was a revelation I have never forgotten, for I saw clearly then the vast difference there is between true bravery and courage born of brute strength and good physical condition. It is even greater than the difference between steel and iron. It was only later, when I was standing a turn on guard, and most of the crew were snoring heavily, that I heard him suppress a groan as he tried to adjust his soft, strained muscles to his hard bed.

No desertions occurring during the night, and the men expressing nervousness over snakes and other animals that might be prowling about, Captain Van Tassel decided to issue pistols and cutlases once more to all hands. The powder horns, muskets, and shot, however, were retained under guard, each man having only the two rounds in his pistol.

ALL during the morning the men seemed more cheerful than they had when first brooding over their situation. Clay was found to patch the coffee pot; a big haul of clams was made on the nearby beach; Uncle George shot a wild hog; and another man killed a big turtle. Meantime the work on the barricade went on steadily so that, with logs and earth, we had erected a bullet-proof wall across the mouth of the cavern before noon observation. There were no loop-holes, but it was breast high, and afforded ample protection for all but the head and shoulders when aiming.

But we were still handicapped for means with which to cook our food properly; and, our first attempts at moulding clay utensils proving failures, Yens Eriksson, the bos'n's mate, disappeared that afternoon. He was seen running along the beach toward the river's mouth by Johannsen, who fired a shot at him, but missed. This reduced our party to sixteen. Then, at supper time, another accident occurred which had its effect in causing further gloom. Anthony Buzzel, the coxswain, having professed a knowledge of baking clay, fashioned a huge pot and glazed it over the fire. When it had cooled it appeared quite hard, and Buzzel stood back, surveying it with a proud smirk. Thereupon the negro cooks set out to make a sort of potage, with water, wild hog meat and ship's biscuit; but when the mess was bubbling merrily the pot suddenly disintegrated and all was lost. The remaining pieces of the hog were scorched in the hurried efforts of the cooks to broil them, spitted on long sticks; and, after gnawing at them, Buzzel and Barnaby Horn seized the first opportunity, immediately after dark, to slip away.

"Fourteen, and they are now twenty," said my uncle, frowning. "If this keeps up, Gentry'll have enough by tomorrow night to wipe us out any time he sees fit."

We had posted a sentry with a glass above the cavern to watch the ship, and this man had reported gigs going ashore now and again during the day, but with only a few men aboard. Another had gone down the bay toward Kidd's Mauley and returned, doubtless carrying a relief for the lookouts there. And now we saw the glow of a great fire on the beach, directly inshore from the ship.

"Spending a night ashore, perhaps," said my uncle. "But we'd best be sure what it means, eh, Captain?"

Captain Van Tassel nodding, I volunteered to do a bit of scouting. Killifer also spoke up, and, armed with muskets and pistols, we set out.

The moon had not yet appeared, so we had little difficulty in working our way through the palms, without detection, to a point within earshot of the buccaneers.

For quite a period we could hear nothing of any consequence, as there were a round dozen in the circle around the fire, and all shouting or singing at once in a merry bedlam. A keg of brandy had been broached, and pannikins were being passed from hand to hand. Gentry sat to one side, on a log, with Jenkins beside him.

All were heavily armed; discovery

meant almost certain death for us; yet there were several points which almost made me laugh aloud. Every man there, including the recent deserter, Erickson, aped his new commander. Their heads were wrapped with colored scarfs; bright sashes adorned their waists; and they wore their headdress cock-a-pie, over one eye, as Gentry did, and even attempted to imitate him in the way he had of turning his remarkably shrewd eyes aside without turning his head. When they arose, and moved about, they swaggered like a bucko mate ashore at a longshoremen's picnic; when they spoke, they used tones at least an octave below those I had heard when they were honest hands aboardship. They used the most dreadful oaths, each seeming to vie with the others in coining new expletives; but whenever Gentry spoke, or reached out with his pannikin, it was laughable to see them fall silent instantly, or stumble over one another in an effort to serve him first.

"Ah!" he would say, sitting there with his air of superb assurance. "Thankee for that, Bill. Here's luck!" Or, having downed a potion, he would cry, "Well, now, you tell me this: does this sort of life beat being hazed afore the mast, with a few dollars when port is reached—or doesn't it?" Whereupon they would howl, and pound one another on the back in glee.

"Here's the way it is with me," he said once: "I'm cap'n, and him as forgets it will know about it, by the Flying Dutchman! But you see how I am: I ain't so high and mighty I can't take a drink with them as is brave enough to sail under the Jolly Roger. Dooty must be done, to be sure; ships can't be sailed nohow without it; but once there's no dooty to worry about, we live. Ah, but you made no mistake in jining Cap'n Gentry. Once we has the treasure aboard, why, we'll be rolling in money—rolling in it, I tell you, like drunken lords."

"Ah, Cap'n," cried one, "and when do we go after it?"

"Why, a day or too more, at this rate, and we'll have enough to laugh at 'em," Gentry replied.

"But where is the treasure, Cap'n?" Erickson asked.

"Where is it?" Gentry returned, in his easy, deep tones. "Well, now, men, I'll tell you: it ain't far from the waterfall. That much I'll tell you. Best to play safe whenever possible—so I won't tell you exactly where till

"Scatter and find them, men!"

we gets there. But in the meantime, mind—in the meantime—if anything should happen to me, it's sewed up here in my shirt. The directions, I mean."

"Fair enough," said Erickson; and the buccaneers chorused an agreement.

As Gentry turned once more to young Jenkins and the men fell to singing, Killifer suggested going. We had at least learned one point; the approximate location of the treasure. But I insisted on remaining in the hopes of learning more about their plans.

It was well that we did. A half hour passed; I was beginning to itch all over and aching to ease myself, when suddenly a shot sounded from the direction of the cavern, followed by three more in rapid succession.

The buccaneers were on their feet on the instant.

"That wouldn't be Allen and Thompson on Kidd's Mauley, would it?" cried Jenkins.

"Don't think so," said Gentry. "It's nearer. No; it's near that cave." And suddenly he grinned. "Now, what would you say if it was more mates a-breakin' away for to jine us?"

His guess proved correct. Within a half hour we heard voices on the beach; and the buccaneers, who had resumed their places about the fire, leaped up once more, muskets in hand.

"Who goes?" roared Gentry.

"Five more to ship with Cap'n Gentry, sir," came the voice of a seaman named Latham from the darkness.

"Come up, then, one at a time," said Gentry.

The five were shortly standing before him: three white sailors, and two of the negro servants.

"Well," said Gentry, "what happened? Ah, Nero," to one of the negroes, "I see you're wounded in the arm. Here, there, Erickson, you take four hands and go aboard ship for that medical kit. Can't let a new messmate suffer."

"It's like this, sir," said Latham, when Erickson and his crew departed. "That damned hazer of a Dutchman sends out the five of us under the bos'n, O'Donnell, to cut more firewood. So I put it up to him, O'Donnell I mean, to go. Well, he wouldn't, he said, and with that Larry here hit him a clip with the butt of his pistol. He went down, and we started. But he got two shots at us, one getting Nero. We fired back, but don't know whether we hit him or not."

"Anyway, you are here," said Gentry. "Ha!" He paused to reckon. "Why, that makes us twenty-five now, and them—let's see—only nine left. Men, we'll start for the treasure first thing tomorrow morning. Get round, now, and welcome your new messmates."

The men came crowding round; they pounded the new buccaneers lustily on the back, thrusting pannikins at them besides; and Lathan was just about to down his drink, after saluting Gentry, when he paused suddenly and held up his left hand.

"I almost forgot!" he cried. "That young Bellew and Killifer are here somewhere spying on you."

"What?" roared Gentry. "Scatter and find 'em, men. Lively, all hands!"

But before one could move Killifer thrust his musket forward and fired. The shot struck Latham in the forehead, and he pitched backward into the fire. My own musket thundered a second later, but, though I had aimed at Gentry, he seemed to leap aside, as if warned by instinct; and someone behind him cried out in pain. Then Killifer and I were off, running for our lives.

CHAPTER XI

AMBUSCADE

THE pursuit is in full cry on the instant. Musket balls whipped through the thickets about us; pistols cracked behind us; and as we burst out of the brush and made for the beach, where there was no danger of being tripped by vines, the buccaneers came thunder-

ing after us like so many enraged wolves in sight of quarry.

Twice I paused to wheel and fire my double-barreled pistols. Killifer also fired; but, for all we could tell in the darkness, our shots did not take effect. On the contrary, the flashes of our pistols seemed only to serve in locating us more nearly so that the answering shots whistled perilously close. Twice I was showered with sand from hits close to my heels.

We had, of course, the advantage of a fair start; yet we had run but a short distance southward along the hard-packed sand below the high-tide mark when I heard one runner pounding along behind me and gaining with every step. He had an obstruction in one nostril which caused a shrill, whistling sound whenever he breathed rapidly; and I knew him for the man Martin.

All in vain were my efforts to leave him behind. He came up on me like an antelope, overhauling me, so to speak, hand over hand. I had not a shot left; at any minute I expected a pistol ball in the back. But he also had discharged his pistols, it appeared, for as he came up close behind me, he aimed a cut at me with his heavy cutlas.

He panted as he struck, and the blade sung as it sliced through the air. I lunged forward barely in time; the point nicked my right shoulder and slashed a rent in the back of my shirt.

The cut must have thrown him off his stride an instant, for he lost a bit of ground. But he soon regained it. And again he cut at me with all his strength, the blade fairly whistling in its vicious, downward whip. I avoided it only by a desperate leap aside, and the point seemed to miss my neck by a bare inch.

Killifer, meantime, was a good ten feet in the lead. It was useless to call on him for assistance; we could not stop to engage the man for long, for his comrades were not far behind; so, realizing that another cut might reach the mark, I gained several steps by a terrific burst of speed. This little gain enabled me to grasp the muzzle of my musket in both hands. Then, as Martin closed in once more, with his cutlas raised aloft, I wheeled and swung the gun with all my strength.

Stock and cutlas met with a ringing crash. The hanger was knocked from his hand, and went sailing toward the treetops; and as his impetus carried him forward I raised my right foot and planted it savagely full in the stomach. He staggered backward, bent over, and gasped in agony. I gave him no chance to recover. Whipping the musket aloft, I brought every thew into play as I brought it down. The stock beat down his upflung arms, caught him fair, with a sickening crunch, on the side of the head, and broke off short. Martin struck the sands with a plop like that of a heavy-laden sack.

A hoarse yell not twenty feet away, followed by another pistol shot, now lent me wings, and I flew along the sands once more after Killifer, throwing aside the useless barrel as I went. None of the remaining buccaneers overtook us. After a half dozen more futile shots, they gave over the pursuit; and at last, panting and sobbing for breath, we reached the cavern in safety.

"God!" cried Uncle George, throwing his arms around me. "God!" He seemed unable to find any other word to express his thankfulness for my escape, and nearly choked me in his embrace.

Once we had regained our breath, our story was soon told. Thereupon the captain ordered immediate steps taken for defence against a possible attack. Angered by the death of Martin and Latham, and excited with brandy, it seemed altogether likely that they would be upon us as soon as the moon had risen; so all muskets were loaded, cutlases and pistols laid ready to hand, and six of us posted at the barricade. O'Donnell, who had suffered a deep gash on the head, and the negro, Sam, were told off to aid the skipper in reloading.

How anxiously we peered into the darkness you may well imagine. The two deaths had left Gentry with twenty-three men; he was more than likely to use eighteen or twenty in the attack; and we were now nine in number. The list included Johannsen, Killifer, the judge, my uncle, the skipper, the negro slave, O'Donnell, a seaman named Suggs, and me.

"Vun t'ing," said the captain. "Ve can now count on all here. Iff dey gome, aim goot, und I know ve lick 'em."

To prevent being silhouetted against the firelight, the skipper had reduced the embers to a few coals. But, when the moon came up and bathed the slope before us in a sheen of beautiful silver, we saw no sign of movement. Nor were we disturbed during the next two weary hours.

"I guess id iss he figgers to get der dreasure abort first," said the captain, then. Forthwith the fire was rekindled, and we were divided into two watches—Johannsen, Killifer, Sam, and I in the one, and the judge, Uncle George, Suggs and O'Donnell in the other. My uncle's watch was left on guard, with one sentry posted, and we lay down to sleep.

About four in the morning the captain roused all hands.

"Surbrise iss der t'ing," he declared, and outlined briefly a daring plan. The mutineers, he reasoned, would do one of two things—attack us, or go for the treasure. In either case he proposed to get in the first telling blow. To do this, he now ordered us to take two muskets and two pistols apiece, and follow him.

We were soon trooping after him, munching a breakfast of raisins and cheese as we marched.

The sky overhead was still dark as pitch, but in the western fringe of that black bowl hung the morning moon of the tropics, a great round yellow disk, resembling a lighted port-hole in a solid wall of ebony. It gave light enough for us to pick our way rapidly through the palms above the tide mark; and within a half hour we had found a position in the thickets overlooking the anchorage and the river's mouth. We did not sight a single pirate on the way; for only the smouldering embers of their fire remained, and apparently all had gone aboard ship.

"Not a man shall fire till I gifs der vord," said the captain. "If dey pulls in for der shore, dot means dey vill attack. If dey pulls py der river, dot means treasure. Vateffer der case, ve haf plendy time to fire und get back py der cavern."

WE HAD not long to wait. Soon the first flaming rays of the sun shot up, like a great forest blaze, high into the western sky behind us; soon the mists of the bay were rising and floating over the ridge on Blackbeard's Boot; and soon the beautiful white ship was revealed on the smooth, clear water. A whistle blew aboard her; men were seen moving about her deck; and before another half hour had passed by

we could see them trooping toward the gangplank.

"See der shoffels?" said the captain. "Dot means dreasure."

We made out fifteen men going aboard two gigs. With them were Gentry and his mate. All were heavily armed, and they stored a heavy load of shovels, picks, axes and ropes, with other supplies, aboard the gigs before shoving off.

"Oh, t'under!" the captain muttered then. "Chentry's boat pulls avay first. Steady now, men. Dey vill be separated—ve fire on dot poat only. No misses, now. Mr. Pellew and I vill take Chentry; Johannsen, Fallon; Sam und der chudge, Erickson; O'Donnell und Suggs, Dumphey; Killifer und Jack, take dot man Buzzle. Dot's for der first shot. Der next—vot's left."

All of us, I think were fairly steady; at least all nodded to signify that they understood. Only the rolling whites of Sam's eyes revealed the owner's excitement. Each man was well concealed, with an opening in the ground palms and vines before him ready for the insertion of his musket; and beside him lay the second piece, ready primed and loaded.

Pulling steadily, Gentry's boat was two-thirds of the way toward the river's mouth before Jenkins followed him with the other gig. Eight men were with Gentry; five with Jenkins.

A few more strokes, and they were within fifty yards of us. It seemed to me that I could hear my own heart beating as I waited for the word. And I can never forget the picture made by that motley crew—Gentry in the stern, puffing tranquilly at a pipe, and the others, with their sleeves rolled high, swaying back and forth on the oars to Fallon's steady chant. I particularly remember the red silk handkerchief in the breast pocket of Buzzel's gray shirt, revealed each time as he pulled back on his oar.

"Dake aim!" said the captain then. I, for one, aimed as steadily as I could, fair at Buzzel's shoulder.

"Fire!" cried the skipper.

The muskets roared in a volley that smote the air like a clap of thunder.

Erickson pitched forward. Fallon flopped head down over the side of the gig. The man beside Dumphey sprang up with a scream and fell into the water, where he sank in a foam of blood. Buzzell yelled in agony, grasping his hairy forearm; while Gentry, whirling on his seat, showed a cheek flooding blood.

All this I saw as I picked up the other musket, and leaped up for a second shot. This time I aimed at Gentry; but as quick as winking he had scooped up the dead man, Fallon, holding him with his left arm before his breast. My bullet struck Fallon in the back. As for the others' shots, at least three took effect, Buzzel being killed outright, and two others being wounded. Dumphey saved himself by following Gentry's example.

"Back to der cavern, my lats!" shouted the captain; for the men aboard ship, cursing like madmen, were uncovering a long nine.

There was an uproar in the second gig as we ran; they gave over rowing and fired a few ragged shots at us; but their aim was hurried, and none of us was hit.

"Steady, now, men!" the skipper panted when we had run some distance. "Slow down to a valk. See? Der odders row to Chentry's poat."

We were glad enough of the respite, for all were puffing heavily. And as we walked on, at a good pace, to be sure, we gleefully checked up observations. Most of us were agreed—and this turned out to be correct—that Dumphey was the only man to escape injury. We were sure that at least four were dead, and that four more, including Gentry, had been more or less seriously wounded. We reasoned that seven at least were no longer to be counted as fit combatants; and this reduced their numbers to sixteen effectives.

We were counting them over, and more than elated over the success of the skipper's move, when suddenly a long nine roared on board ship. At the same time the trees and leaves about us were spattered with a shower of leaden slugs. It might never have happened again; indeed, it was an apparently silly shot, fired in our general direction in a fit of rage; but poor Sam, the negro slave, was struck fair in the middle of the back. He fell to the ground and expired without a sound.

"Ah, by the gods, I'd sooner it had been me!" cried my uncle, in a broken voice.

"Vell," said the skipper, "id's too padt, but some losses haf to be. Ve must hurry along, und brebare for boarters."

My uncle slung his musket behind him and picked up his dead servant; and then, quite sobered by this loss, we went on toward the cave.

CHAPTER XII

THE MUTINEERS ATTACK

IVING poor Sam a hasty burial on the sandy slope near the cave, we re-entered our fortress, and after drinking deep of the cool refreshing spring water, reloaded all muskets in preparation for an attack.

"Hundred to vun he gomes now," said the skipper. "Anyvay, ve iss ready. Und if he makes it oudt to dry for der dreasure anyhow, ve go oudt und maype surbrise him some more."

He then gave orders for all of us to lie down and snatch what rest we could, while he kept watch at the barricade.

What with the chuckling bubble of the spring and the reaction from the morning's excitement, I was soon fast asleep; nor did I arouse until, at about eight bells, a thunderous report brought me to my feet. The echoes were still rolling back and forth between the hills, and the birds were screaming raucously when I rushed to join the others at the barricade.

All was clear at a glance. The steep fan-shaped clearing on the approach to our cave ran down almost to shore, and only a thin fringe of palm trees, just above high-tide mark, intervened between us and Drake's Bay when looking direct to eastward. These were so widely separated that the view was unobstructed, for all practical purposes; and there, anchored broadside on to shore, lay the *Anthony Wayne*. Gentry had brought her down to a position opposite the cave. The approach from the shore was little over one hundred yards long, and as she was anchored at a similar distance from the beach, her starboard guns were now trained on us at a range of some two hundred yards.

"Back!" roared the skipper. "Dot vun vas short, but der next one, maype——"

It was well we dodged back behind the thick rock walls at either side of the opening, for the next shot came shrieking through the mouth of the cave, barely clearing the barricade, and smashed against the rocks in the rear. Then a musket ball spatted viciously into the logs close by the skipper's head.

"Plaze avay," grunted the skipper. "A miss is chust so goot as a mile."

"Let me relieve you there!" cried my uncle. "It's only fair we should all take a turn at watching."

"Not till I say de vord, sir," said the skipper, with simple dignity. "I am captain; I keep de vatch."

More musket shots struck the barricade or whistled through the opening; and Johannsen explained the situation to me. The buccaneers had landed a party somewhere to northward of the open space, and these men were now firing from the woods flushing the northern side of the slope.

"They can't get atop this here hill, and come down on us sudden," he said, "account of that there bluff face. Raises fifty feet or more right above the mouth. What they hopes to do is bash in that there barricade; then, I take it, they'll board."

The captain, who was evidently watching the match flare, dodged aside; and another report sounded aboard ship, while a great shower of dirt was thrown up over the barricade.

"A leedle closer," the skipper commented. "Vell, now, he gets a bit pretty soon, dot's sure. Den ve see if der barricade holds."

According to his estimate, there were not over a dozen buccaneers in the land party, as he had counted but four men firing the gun on board.

"Dey t'ink ve still half nine," he said, "und dey von't gome up der slope unless dey knock ofer der prestvorks."

"Ah!" croaked the seaman, Suggs. "If she holds!"

The man was plainly fearful of those screaming projectiles; and I must confess that I, too, was keyed to a high pitch by now. Nor was I Suggs' only companion in this. Not a man was smiling; even Uncle George was gripping the stock of his musket till his knuckles gleamed white; O'Donnell was spitting nervously and muttering under his breath.

"I'll stake my reputation she holds!" declared the judge, at this juncture. Thereupon he launched into a discourse on ballistics, angles of fire, foot-poundage-at-impact, errors in depth and dispersion, airing a knowledge of artillery fire which he had gained while serving as an officer during the Revolution. He had given many helpful suggestions while we were building the barricade, so that we had thrown up four layers of logs, with a cushion of dirt between each layer, or wall, and another thick cushion of earth against the outer side. He contended that the chances for direct hits were hardly one in five, since the ship would rock a little with the recoil, and there was also an angle of elevation to take into account; and he declared that the shots would penetrate the stiff, brittle sides of a ship more easily than this cushioned breastwork.

"Now," he was saying, "we must remember that an unsettled gun——"

But just here the long nine roared again; and the roundshot, with a terrifying screech, landed with a terrific crush fair in the center of the barricade!

For one horrible instant I thought that at least half my friends had been

The round shot landed fair

killed. All the front of the cavern was choked with a cloud of dust. Cries and confusion reigned within; and simultaneously the buccaneers below us yelled in triumph and a half dozen musketballs came singing through the opening. Then, to add to our temporary panic, the three remaining guns on the starboard side were touched off, one after the other. One shot struck the bluff overhead, bringing down a shower of rock; the second threw up a cloud of sand from the slope into our very faces; and the third struck a top log, and ricochetted against the roof, thence down again into the brook, where it sizzled and steamed like an angry devil.

On top of all this, there came a sudden command from the skipper. He had been fanning the dust away with his hat and peering sharply over one end of the breastwork; now he ordered all of us into position.

"But with heads down!" he stipulated. "I tell you ven to get up."

HAD WE obeyed him to the letter, things might have gone differently; but in the excitement most of us thrust up our heads, and fanned frantically at the dust with our hats, for all heard another wild hurrah from the buccaneers on shore. Through the dust cloud I saw Gentry, with his cheek covered with court-plaster, come running out of the woods at the head of a dozen pirates; others caught sight of them at the same time; and, though the captain roared like an angry bull, Suggs thrust his musket forward and fired. This was like setting a torch to a magazine. On the instant all of us were firing—not merely the one musket, but all the others, as fast as we could pick them up, till the whole cavern mouth, and our front as well, was filled with acrid smoke.

"Cutlases, you fools!" roared the captain, then.

Most of us scrambled to obey the order.

"They've turned tail, the swabs!" Johannsen yelled.

Back we plunged to the breastwork, fanning at the smoke for a better view. Then all yelled triumphantly as we verified Johannsen's report. The buccaneers were running back into the trees, leaving one man prone on the ground.

"Back, und loat dem muskets!" roared the skipper. His voice fairly shook with rage, and we hurried to obey him.

When the smoke cleared away he stood looking at us, his large, fat face a fiery red. All of us—even my uncle—avoided his glaring eye.

"You know vot you done it?" he exploded at last. "Dem swabs vas fooled py dot hit. Dey t'inks maype half is gone here. But do you shtay down like vot I tolt you? No. Und do you vait till I gifs de vort, und knock 'em ofer like pitchins, close in? *Nein.* Nacherally, so soon he sees vot he haf to oxpect, Chentry orters dem back. Und you shoots away all dot powder und bag yoost vun man—yoost vun."

Not a man answered him; not a man raised his head.

"Vell, now," he went on, when we had finished reloading the guns, "you see how it is. The chudge vas right. Only vun log displaced a little, und der center buckled. Dey can't get hits so fast ve can't fix 'im between times,

und now I pet you dey don't attack."

As time wore on, the captain's guess proved to be right. As soon as the four men aboard ship had finished reloading they resumed their cannonading, but we no longer minded this. Most of the shots were over or under the target, and the direct hits did not penetrate. Nor did the buccaneers leave the woods again. They waited now for the flying dust to clear after each direct hit; and, seeing the barrier still standing, and having had ample proof that we were taking advantage of the cover to either side of the opening, they contented themselves with sniping at us whenever a head appeared over the top. Finally, near noon, the cannonading ceased.

BETWEEN shots we managed to move our meager supplies and our fire out of line with the door. We were naturally heartened by the failure of Gentry's guns; but, as the sniping from the woods continued, we realized that the pirate had decided on another plan. This was to keep up bottled up and starve us into submission.

With the rations we had pooled and the results of our recent foraging, we estimated that we might hold out a week at most.

"Worse'n that, we'll be out of tobacco afore that time," O'Donnell grumbled.

"Vell, now," said the skipper, "I don't intend ve should shtay here always like rats in a trap. Vun day, maype—den, if dey don't go avay und gif us a chance to hunt, I t'ink ve take a hand attacking oursellufs. Better die fighting as starving—it's easier."

"Right you are, sir," growled Johannsen. "I'm for a go at 'em any time you say the word."

By this time the captain had been relieved from sentry duty, and shortly afterward I was called on to relieve Killifer. It was then about two bells, or one o'clock.

It was now the hottest part of the day, and the yellow slope before me was baking in the sun. A swarm of flies was buzzing about the dead man in the grass, while beyond them were the mutineers, laughing and talking in the outer edge of the trees. No shots having been fired from our cave in answer to their sniping—the skipper wanting to save ammunition—these buccaneers had grown bolder and bolder, and I could see several of them plainly as soon as I raised my head.

"Keep it down, or I'll take it off!" yelled Dumphey. He raised his gun and fired with the words, the bullet clipping the top of the barricade. As I dodged back, the marksman's mates laughed derisively.

A half hour or more passed in this fashion, with an occasional shot whipping close and the buccaneers taunting me, when I noted a boat pulling out from behind the trees and heading toward the *Anthony Wayne*. In it sat Gentry, with two men at the oars.

I reported this at once to the skipper.

"Zo?" he cried. A blue flame blazed in his eyes. "Ve act at vunce, den!" he continued, jumping up. "Ve're efen now, almost. Und dere is anodder gig behint dose trees, I'm sure."

"What do you propose?" cried Uncle George.

"Kill 'em, dot's vot!" said the skipper. "Scatter 'em. Capture a gig. Lay 'em abort."

"In the face of them guns?" O'Donnell exclaimed, dubiously.

"In der face of all hell!" cried the skipper. "All hants, now—pistols und cutlases only. Rememper der Romans und der short sworts. Ve half to into dem go—like dis!" And he made a vicious upward jab into the air with his cutlas, as though disembowling an enemy.

"Bravo!" cried my uncle, grabbing up a cutlas.

All of us, save perhaps O'Donnell, echoed this cry. The skipper's spirit had set us afire; we were sickened of being sniped at with no return, and the maddest of ventures seemed preferable to remaining inactive. So we were ready for the word in a trice.

"Now!" cried the skipper. "Line up."

We obeyed him at once, standing abreast some distance back of the barricade, and all breathing like horses ready for the word at a race.

"Ve take it on der run!" the skipper declared. "Efery man must go like der devil. Yoost keep vun t'ought—get into 'em. Id's dot or death. You vas reaty?"

We tightened up our belts, spit on our hands, and nodded grimly, one after the other.

"All right, den!" cried the skipper. "Go!"

He should have said, "Come!"; for, with all his fat, he took that barricade in a bound!

But we were right behind him. Over the barricade we went, yelling like fiends, and charged after him.

My memory of that charge is somewhat blurred. We ran, I know that; we ran like winged devils down that hill. One second saw us going over the barricade; the next—or so it seemed to me at the time—we were crashing into them.

Of course they fired; and of course it must have taken us a good quarter of a minute to reach the woods. Yet I heard the reports, saw the smoke, and felt the wind of the whistling bullets as in a dream. Then I saw a form before me—that of the mate, Jenkins—and ran at him with my cutlas raised on high.

He screamed in terror. His pistol was discharged full in my face; yet in the same heart-beat he had gone down, with a great gash in the neck. He had paid the highest price for his treachery, being dead before he struck the ground.

AS HE fell, the air round me was rent with shots, the clashing of steel, savage shouts and howls of pain. Eight pirates had been left ashore; one had run when we were half-way down the slope; now Barnaby threw down his musket and fled for his life. As I noted this from the tail of my eye, I heard a bloodthirsty roar, and wheeled just in time to see the cook, LeBlanc, come rushing at me, with his musket clubbed and raised high over his head. But the blow never fell. Uncle George discharged his pistol, and, even as I dodged aside and stumbled over Jenkins' dead body, LeBlanc screamed, dropped his gun, clutched at his side, and pitched to the ground.

Killifer, meantime, leaped over him and cut down the buccaneer behind him with a single blow; and as I leaped to my feet, the skipper shot down Gunderson. The big Albino, Dumphey, and the man beside him then turned and whipped into the thickets, with the judge and O'Donnell in close pursuit. Only a tree saved Dumphey's worthless life, for the judge aimed a cut at him which would have split him in half, had the blade not struck the trunk. As it was, Dumphey's shirt was soaked with blood from wounds received a moment before.

"To the beach, to the beach!" panted the skipper.

We had only a few steps to take; but when we arrived there, our hearts fell. There was no gig in sight.

"Back, den!" cried the skipper. "See—der gun!"

We dodged back among the trees as a gun roared on board ship, scattering slugs through the foliage all around us. But all had taken cover, and no one was hit.

Hurriedly, then, we took stock of the situation. Johannsen was hobbling painfuly down the slope, with a bullet in the calf of his right leg. Suggs had been killed by Dumphey's cutlas. The judge had been shot through the flesh over his ribs, on the left side; my own face was blackened with powder, and the lobe of my right ear had been shot off; while Killifer had a deep cut in the thigh. Uncle George also displayed a bleeding scalp wound and a dented belt buckle, where a bullet had struck and glanced.

The death of Suggs, and Johannsen's leg wound left us with only six men who could be counted on as able to bear muskets; and some of these were doubtful, if fever set in. But the buccaneers, on the other hand, had suffered much more heavily. The dead man on the slope, killed earlier in the day, and the three who had just died cut their number to fifteen. Of these fifteen we saw at a glance that Gunderson would never aid them again, even if he were lucky enough to survive; for he had been shot through the body, and was now groaning in dire pain. Two others, we knew, had been severely wounded prior to this, so that we had now but a dozen able men to cope with.

One thing gave us immediate aid, and this was the finding of three bottles of brandy. It strengthened our wounded wonderfully. We also listed in our loot four tobacco pouches, four pipes, a flint and tinder, four sailor's clasp knives, six muskets, three cutlases, five pistols, four powder horns, four shot pouches, and a large sack of provisions which they had brought ashore.

Then, after staunching the wounds of our enemy, Gunderson, as best we could, and performing a like service for ourselves, Captain Van Tassel and O'Donnell took position with two muskets apiece near the shore. Firing from behind tree trunks, they kept the buccaneers aboard ship dodging behind the bulwarks while we removed our loot and assisted Killifer and Johannsen up the slope to the cavern.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CALDRON SEETHES

WE reached the cave without further casualties. The very daring of our sudden, savage attack had dumbfounded the buccaneers. We heard Gentry roaring like a lion on board the ship; but he could not force his men to stand at an open gun port; and such musket shots as were fired at us while O'Donnell and the captain reloaded were hurried and badly aimed. Finally, when the last pair of us was over the breastworks, the pirates ceased firing altogether, and kept out of sight behind the bulwarks.

We were glad enough of the respite, for Killifer and the judge were bleeding profusely; and Johannsen was suffering intensely with the ball in his leg. We managed to staunch the wounds of the first two with cool water from the spring, while Uncle George, gritting his teeth, made shift to extract the bullet from the quartermaster's calf with our only surgical instrument—a sailor's clasp-knife. Strong as Johannsen was, he fainted dead away when the ball came out at last, and Uncle George was little better. But a drink of brandy brought them round again; and at last we were able to stretch out on the sand for a much needed rest.

"I suppose," said the judge, "that we're cocks of the walk now on shore, at any rate, and Gentry won't make another attempt to get the treasure. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if he sailed away to get hands with better stomach for his work."

We all agreed that this seemed likely; and that night, when the skipper and O'Donnell had returned, and we heard the men on board singing at the capstan bars, we listened with a mixture of relief and despair. They were raising the anchor, we thought, to sail away; and though this meant a cessation of fighting with buccaneers, we still had the possibility of cannibals to think of, and a dreary battle for mere existence as well.

Even when we heard the plunge of the anchor later on, we were not much heartened. It meant that Gentry had moved out of gunshot from the shore, but might only be waiting until morning to sail away. No one said anything about surrender, but even the indomitable skipper could offer no plan to better our situation. We fell asleep at last in anything but an optimistic frame of mind.

Losing sleep through a trick at sentry go, as well as my smarting ear, I was awakened from a dead stupor some time after daybreak by a cry from O'Donnell. A signal was being flashed from Kidd's Mauley, he said, and all of us rushed to the barricade.

A thin morning mist still hung over the bay and around the base of Kidd's Mauley, but not so thick that we could not see the hazy outlines of the ship. It lay at anchor in the middle of the bay, almost directly to eastward of us. And there, on the northern side of the peak to southward and at a point near the top, was a buccaneer holding aloft the burnished bottom of a pannikin.

This he moved back and forth, now exposing it to the sun, now swinging it to his side.

"A ship—or canoes," said Uncle George. "See there? He's down behind that shoulder so they can't see him signal from seaward."

"Ve see," said the captain. "Jack, up aloft mit a telescope."

I was not long in gaining the top of the bluff, from which I commanded a good view of Morgan's Bay. And I had no sooner looked than my blood seemed to freeze within my veins. There, rounding Bowsprit Bluff, between the reefs and shore, were nine big canoes.

They were equipped with outriggers, and a sail each, forward; and there were between six and eight savages in each craft, most of them swinging long paddles. They were heading almost directly toward me on a course which, I judged, would bring them to the beach in Cannibal Cove, an indentation in the coast-line between Kidd's Mauley and Middle Point.

I ran to the edge of the bluff and shouted my news to the captain. He stood there a moment below me, looking up as though momentarily stunned, but in a trice he had jerked himself together.

"See vere dey lant, und don't let 'em see you!" he ordered. "I pring up your breaksfast."

A gig was now racing from the ship down Drake's Bay toward Kidd's Mauley with six men at the oars. Before my breakfast reached me, this gig had picked up the two sentries and was pulling back to the *Anthony Wayne*, while the savages, without changing their course, headed directly toward Cannibal Cove.

My uncle, the captain and O'Don-

nell came up together. As I munched at ship's biscuit and jerked beef, they passed the glass from hand to hand. All, for a time, were grim and silent.

"If they stay around that cove," said my uncle, presently, "we're safe enough, I'd think. But if they come round Kidd's Mauley——"

"Chentry gets dem first," the skipper cut in, with a little grin. "Ve see, first, if dey lants dere."

Within the hour the savages were inside the cove, and, shortly afterward, they had run their canoes on shore and were swarming out upon the beach. Here we could no longer obtain a clear view of them, for the intervening trees at the shore line; but, as they moved in out of our sight, we estimated that at least sixty warriors comprised the party. And from one canoe we saw them remove three bound prisoners, while from another we watched them carry something which we took to be a wooden idol.

"Vun t'ing," said the skipper, lowering the glass, "I can't make out a sign of a gun among 'em. Bows und spears und a kind of swort, jess; but no guns. Did you see any?"

We shook our heads.

"Vell, dat's good!" Van Tassel grunted. He looked toward Drake's Bay, where the gig was again leaving the ship and heading toward Kidd's Mauley. "Gone for annoder look," he commented. "Guess he's like me—don't know yet oxactly vot is best."

"First time I've seen you hesitate!" Uncle George cried. "But see here: what do you think of trying for a canoe?"

The skipper's face beamed ecstatically. He thrust out his hand and caught that of Uncle George in a crushing grip.

"I always vas glat to sail vor you!" he cried. "Now I could kiss you py both cheeks, yoost like a Frenchman. *Himmel!* Ve do it."

AITING only until we saw smoke coming up above the intervening trees—the men in the *Anthony Wayne,* in meantime, breaking out sail and drifting down toward Kidd's Mauley—we scrambled down to the bluff. The judge, Killifer, and Johannsen were then left in the cave, while the skipper, Uncle George, O'Donnell and I, with two pistols, two muskets, and a cutlas apiece, set out across the northern end of the peninsula toward Cannibal Cove.

Taking advantage of every dip for cover, we soon came within hearing distance of the savages, for they were shouting and hallooing to one another like children on a picnic, and making no effort to concealment. Thereafter, however, we proceeded cautiously, and it was over an hour before we had worked our way to some thickets on a promontory overlooking their fire.

I could not forget the sight we

We could see them clearly

looked upon then. They were not over fifty yards away, and we could see them clearly. Some were squatting about a great fire; some were dancing and gamboling up and down the beach, and some were busy with great kettles and sacks of provender, mixing up a stew. Two of them came lugging a goatskin gourd of water from a nearby spring; and still another pair were impaling a great turtle with their spears. They were physical giants, like all the rest; indeed, there was not a man among them under six feet in height.

As we had estimated, there were over sixty, at the least counting—sixty great, bronzed warriors, naked save for a fringed girdle of monkey skin worn round the waist. With one exception, they were almost identical in dress. Save for him whom we soon perceived to be the chief, each man wore a shining band of yellow metal, which we took at first to be brass, around his right ankle. Another was fastened around the left wrist. All the heads were shaved, or plucked bald, save for a two-inch ridge running from the brow to a point at the back of the head, and just below the ears. This ridge of stiffened hair rose like the tuft on a Roman helmet, and on a line at the middle of the skull. All the warriors also wore an amulet of boar's tusks around the neck; and since these varied in number, I supposed them to be decorations for valorous deeds in battle. A great number wore rings of yellow metal through their ear lobes and nostrils, but this seemed to be optional. Every man but the chief, however, had a red circle painted on his right cheek.

The chief was a man who would have drawn attention anywhere. He was easily seven feet in height. He wore metal bands on both wrists and both ankles, and another about his head. But if he had worn no insignia whatever, one would have marked him instantly. Where most of the others were laughing and displaying their rows of beautiful white teeth, this man's cadaverous features were as immobile as a mask. He sat apart, on a dais covered with skin, his feet planted on a jaguar hide, and his fierce, gloomy eyes burning like two points of light deep back in dark cavernous sockets, as solemn and forbidding a figure as that of the wooden idol, which was placed on another jaguar hide under a nearby palm tree.

This idol, which was about eight feet high and evidently hollow—since they had carried it easily up the beach—was presented to us in profile. Its features were menacing in the extreme; what it resembled I could not clearly tell, as its nose was like the beak of an eagle, and its temples were adorned with mountain goat's horns; but its arms were human in shape and folded across its breast. The whole was painted in every glaring color of the rainbow.

These things we noted, of course, in a glance. We also noted that there were no guns of any description in sight; no weapons, in fact, save bows and arrows, long, shovel-bladed spears, short darts, and shields covered with stretched hide, with some heavy broadswords, at least five feet in length and four inches wide. Like the spears, the blades appeared to be made of hammered bronze, while the handles were wooden and allowed a two handed grip.

"Cut a bull in two with one swipe," O'Donnell whispered to me.

I merely nodded, for my eyes were now fastened on the poor naked prisoners. There were not only two; there were a dozen, all seated or lying in a little circle not far from the idol. They were smaller in stature than their captors; neither were they so

prepossessing in appearance, having darker skins and broader nostrils; but despite their repulsive, monkey-like features, their plight filled my heart with pity. Time and again my eyes come back to them—drawn, I suppose, by an irresistible, morbid fascination. Which one of them, I thought, would be first to feel the executioner's stroke.

"Captain," I whispered, "let's save those poor devils. Let's fire now."

"No, Jack," the captain whispered in return. "See how dey're scattered." And I could not but nod, for there were several on our left forefront. "Ve vant dem a goot safe distance ven ve fire," he went on. "Bunched arount der fire, if possible. If dey ain't afraid from firearms, dot gifs a chance for us to run, anyhow. Und, anyvay—see dere!"

I followed his nod, and almost vomited outright. A little group moving aside just them, we saw two butchers busy with knives on a prisoner's dead body. As they dismembered it, the parts were handed to others, who tossed them into the pots. These were then carried to the fire.

"It iss too late, you see," said the captain. "Dey probably kill him yoost before ve come."

Just then the chief made a signal, and two warriors seized another prisoner and dragged him to a position before the idol. The poor wretch wailed piteously, and all his comrades howled in sympathy. But the bound captive was forced down to a position on his knees, one strapping warrior seizing him by the thick, black hair, and pulling the head forward, and down, while another poised at one side, ready with a two-handed sword.

"For God's sake, Captain!" whispered O'Donnell. "Let's shoot."

"No!" the skipper whispered, fiercely. "Der time iss nod now."

O'Donnell, as pale as a ghost, slid back a little way and buried his face in shaking hands.

Horrified, yet held to the gruesome spectacle as though by some magnet, I saw the stately chief arise. With somber dignity he strode toward the idol. Pausing behind the prisoner, he bent down on one knee and bowed his head. As he did so, all the other warriors, save the two executioners, paused in their tracks, and did likewise.

The chief mumbled something, and his warriors broke out in a brief, weird chant. It came to an abrupt end, in the very middle of a note. The chief suddenly shouted, and from his warriors burst another chant—this time short and sharp and unutterably savage.

"Ha-ee! Ha-ee! Ha-ee! Ha!" they intoned in rising cadence, with fierce exultation ringing in every note and the last "Ha!" coming out like the bang of a drum. Then, suddenly the chief arose, held up his hand, and all rose with him, while the swordsman raised his weapon and stood ready for the stroke.

"Oh, oh, oh!" wailed the bound prisoners.

But before the sword could fall there came a cry from a savage on our left, and from all the warriors there came a cry of amazement.

The *Anthony Wayne* was winging her way out of Drake's Bay.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW ALLIES—AND ENEMIES

WHEN sighted the schooner had rounded the southern end of Kidd's Mauley and was steering due northwest on a course to bring her close to the entrance of Cannibal Cove. She came skimming over the sparkling blue water with the grace of a swan, her beautiful white sails agleam in the morning sun; and the savages were at once thrown into a state bordering on panic. Some shouted incoherently, with outflung hand pointing toward the ship; some started running along shore to westward, and others started racing down the broad, gently sloping beach to where the canoes had been drawn up on shore about one hundred yards below the fire.

But the chief brought his followers to heel in short order. Doubtless it was instantly obvious to him that he could not hope to outsail this great winged craft, and he knew at once that he stood the better chance on shore, if the stranger was to prove an enemy. Wheeling about, he gave one great booming shout which halted his men dead in their tracks. With a fierce sweep of his arm he then beckoned them back; and, pointing toward the fire, he stalked toward it and sat down once more on his dais—but this time facing the approaching ship.

In a moment all his men were moving toward him; even the executioners left their prisoner to fall forward at the feet of the hideous idol. As group after group came up and stopped, facing to seaward behind their chief, he was soon shut off from our view.

This was the opportunity for which Captain Van Tassel had been waiting. The savages were now bunched and between us and their fire, and, though things might have turned out far differently had we waited to ascertain Gentry's intentions, we were agreed, afterward, that the skipper was not to be censured for his decision. The ship was still over a mile away, and the savages might separate at any minute.

"Shteady, now!" the captain whispered. "Ven I giff der vort, fire; but holt der secont musket for orters."

As carefully as we could we thrust our muskets forward. Since the range was so short, we had added a dozen small birdshot to each musketball; and now we rested on our elbows, aiming full at the unconscious pack, not fifty yards from us.

"Fire!" the skipper suddenly commanded.

All four muskets roared as one; and the contours of the ground were such that the reports were magnified and came rocketing back from the frowning cliffs on Execution Knob like ripping peals of thunder.

The effect on the savages was shocking. Never have I heard such frenzied yells bursting from human throats. The bird shot could not be counted on for mortal wounds; but they scattered widely, so that at least twenty or more must have felt their vicious sting; while the heavy musketballs tore through the pack with a hideous, ripping sound. At least nine fell to the ground, while their comrades milled over them, shrieking, wailing, and chattering like monkeys in their horrid fear.

"Keep hittin'," said the captain, as coolly as though he were on his quarter deck. "Dis time, yoost Jack und I fire. Now, Jack!"

He and I fired our second muskets on the instant, and those who were not already in motion now ran like madmen. Even the chief forgot his dignity and followed his stampeding warriors. They ran to westward, with the speed of deer hounds, never pausing until they had whipped into the trees on the western side of the cove.

"Loat, first, und den ve go oudt," said the captain.

As quickly as possible we reloaded all pieces and then followed the captain out on the beach.

As we moved out, one of the fallen cannibals, who had evidently been more frightened than hurt, leaped up

and ran, screaming, after his fellows. This man we allowed to depart without further harm. Eleven more lay on the ground, seven of them stone dead and four seriously wounded.

"One thing," said Uncle George: "I don't know that Gentry will let us get away now with one of those canoes, but, by the Lord Harry, I'm going to set these poor devils loose." And he nodded at the prisoners.

It was the first time my uncle had spoken up to assert himself before the captain gave an order; he had taken special pains to leave the leadership in his skipper's hands, as I knew, for the sake of discipline; but now he marched straight for the poor bound wretches without another word.

"A good t'ought," said the skipper, with a little grin. Then, being ever practical, he added dryly, "It may pay us to do it, anyvay. Ve coult maype use dem extra hants if olt Skull Face gets ofer being scared unt gomes back."

At his nod, we stepped after my uncle—though O'Donnell, with a horrible grimace, must needs pause to throw a jaguar skin over the butchered carcass, and kick the pots, with their sickening mess, over into the fire before he could lend a hand.

WHEN we knelt over the prisoners with our knives, all howled dismally; and, despite the sympathy in our tones, the first one released, as soon as he stood free, turned and ran like a deer for the water. Our shouts only served to increase his speed, and we concluded that he must have been temporarily deranged with fright, for he plunged straight into the water and began swimming with frenzied strokes to seaward.

But the others were soon quieted. Some of them, in fact, had been bound so long that they could neither stand, nor even so much as bend their stiffened fingers; they groaned with pain when we tried to help them erect. When we started to chafe their swollen wrists and ankles, the fear in their eyes faded before a look of dog-like gratitude, and one of them caught my hand and pressed it against his cheek. Those who had been bound more loosely soon flexed their muscles and fell to massaging their cramped comrades; and, when the skipper handed two of them swords and made it plain that they were to arm themselves from the litter which their enemies had discarded, they were in raptures.

They danced; they laughed; they shouted; they made the blades whistle through the air to show us what they would do; and they fairly stampeded us with signs of gratitude and affection. Some pressed our hands against their cheeks; some sought to embrace us; others flung themselves on the sands and clasped our ankles in an ecstasy.

Indeed, if we had thought them repulsive before, it was marvelous how wholesome and pleasing their eloquent countenances were now. Furthermore, it was plain that we had rescued anything but cowards. They were musceled like gorillas; one of them, by way of demonstration, picked up a spear and drove the point a full eight inches into a tree from a distance of thirty feet. Eagerly they pointed to the place where their enemies had disappeared, making the most savage of grimaces and begging us with eloquent gestures to follow and annihilate them.

When the captain shook his head, frowned, and pointed toward the approaching ship, they were at first plainly puzzled and disappointed. In a trice another incident set them to redoubling their pleas. One of them ran suddenly to the idol, spat upon it, chopped the face with his sword, and knocked it over. There, on the jaguar skin, lay the head of the slain victim. It had been thrust through the idol's gaping mouth as a sort of offering, I suppose. With a cry to pierce the heart, the savage picked up the head, clutching it to his breast and sobbing as though his heart were broken; whereupon his comrades, crying out with sympathy and rage, ran pell-mell upon the fallen warriors near the fire. In a jiffy they had beheaded every one, dead and wounded alike.

Nor was this all. Before we could quiet them, they rushed upon the idol, carried it to the fire, set it up at the edge, and fed every head through the mouth. Then they pushed the whole farther into the blaze and threw the king's dais after it. Following this—which seemed to satisfy them mightily—they pointed at the pots and by unmistakable signs of nausea made it plain to us that they were not eaters of human flesh. Then, making it plain that they wished to bury their own dead comrade, and receiving permission from the captain, they fell to scooping out a grave in the sands.

All this while there was not a sign from the other savages, though now and again we saw movements and knew they were watching us from the distant trees. And the ship, in the meantime, was drawing rapidly nearer.

"Cap'n," said O'Donnell, rather nervously, "don't you think we'd best up anchor? They'll take a crack at us with them long nines, I shouldn't wonder."

The captain heaved a sigh. He had been standing for a moment in deep thought with a frown upon his face.

"Jess," he said, "I subbose so. Mr. Pellew," he continued, addressing my uncle, "I vas consitering porting dem in, say, two or t'ree canoes, if he drops anchor. Maype vun vould get to him—with luck, maype two. But if dem cannibals see dey have an ally—den look out."

"Exactly," said my uncle, with a sigh on his own account. "They might come back out of the woods into the remaining canoes, and then—" He shrugged. "We'd be between the devil and the deep sea."

"Why, by your leave, Cap'n," said O'Donnell, "here's an idea: shove 'em all off—the canoes, I mean—and put one of these niggers in, say, each one but three. It's a long chance, that, but I haven't seen any short ones, by thunder! Them in the woods couldn't get to us, anyway—and as you say, sir, we might get alongside, with luck."

The captain suddenly crashed his first into his palm.

"Ve try it!" he declared. "If Chentry anchors, ve do it."

Forthwith he made signs to the rescued savages to hurry their burial and, when they were finished, bade them collect their arms. More than enough equipment had been dropped by the fleeing warriors to give each one of our new allies a shield, spear, sword, a bow and, in some cases, even two quivers of arrows. The few remaining weapons were thrown into the fire. Then we strode down in a body toward the canoes.

CHAPTER XV

REPULSED

WE HAD no sooner started for the canoes than the gigantic chief, with several of his warriors, plucked up courage and emerged from the shadowy forest to westward. The chief was gesticulating vehemently, and we could hear him shouting in a

voice choked with rage. This, we saw at once, was having some effect, for now a score or more came out onto the sands, fitting arrows to their long bows.

"Mr. Pellew," said the captain, "try a shot at dem."

My uncle paused, and took careful aim. It was a long range for our pieces, something over three hundred yards, but Uncle George made due allowance for this, and luck was with us. As the gun roared, one of the enemy threw up his arms and fell to the ground with a cry that sent the chills racing up and down my spine.

Our own allies, who had clapped their hands to their ears, now yelled with mingled fear, delight and astonishment; while all but the enemy chieftain turned and fled back behind the trees.

Our allies were in ecstasies. They danced round us like children, touching the guns with fearful but loving gestures; they begged us anew to follow the enemy into the woods. Not until the captain let out a roar like the first blast of a typhoon did they give over. He pointed to the ship, shook his fist at it with palpable hatred, and made it plain to them, at last, that we intended attacking it. When this was understood, the savages at first showed great amazement, pointing to the canoes, illustrating their comparative smallness by holding up their palms, close together, and flinging them wide while nodding at the ship; but, when the captain summoned them on with a jerk of his head, they made it patent on the instant that they would attack a fleet if we desired it.

The tide was ebbing, and we were forced to set to moving the heavy dugouts down the sandy slope, one at a time.

By the time the second proa was in the water the ship was standing in across the mouth of the cove, with Gentry on the poop holding a telescope in his hand. A moment later he hove to, put a boat over the side, picked up the demented savage swimming there in the water, and then, when he was hauled aboard, filled away and stood closer in on the port tack. We had by this time shoved three more canoes into the water; but we might as well have saved ourselves the labor, for we saw men busy at the guns, and their broadside was no sooner presented than they were training them upon us.

"Down!" cried the captain, crouching with the word.

Flame and smoke burst from the side of the ship; the very sides of Execution Knob seemed to be shaking with the re-echoes of the report, and a roundshot screamed directly overhead and threw a fountain of sand up over the fire. The other three guns chimed in, one after the other, one lucky shot smashing in the side of a canoe, the second spanking up a great shower of water at our left, and the third, flying high, cutting down a palm tree beyond the fire.

For my own part, the hair was bristling on the back of my neck. Our new friends, meantime, were on the verge of fleeing. Their eyes were popping; all color had left their dusky features. Had one of us so much as taken a step, they undoubtedly would have run to the other end of the island. But none of us did more than crouch; and the captain, laughing out as though it were all a sort of game, held them in check.

"Vell," he said, standing erect after the last shot, "no vun is hit, vich is our luck. But it's blain ve can't count on dese fellows against dem guns, yoost yet a vile. Dey got to get used to it first. Ve mofe back by der trees a vile."

Cautioning us to move slowly, lest the savages take fright and break, we started back. As it was, their eyes were still round with fear; they gazed backward over their shoulder at the ship and exclaimed in wonder over the hole dug in the sands by the first shot; and now and again they looked at us in utter bewilderment.

"They can't understand why we're not running yet," said my uncle, with a dry chuckle. "If they could feel the chill along my spine, they'd laugh."

"Me, too," said O'Donnell. "Ah, there they come about again. Now for the guns on the other side."

"Valk shteady!" said the skipper. "Ve must holt dese fellows, I tell you."

Another gun roared in a minute or so later. We were then close to the trees. The shot went overhead, lopping off another palm, half-way up the trunk; at this, at least half of our savages broke and ran for the trees.

"Shteady!" the skipper roared.

This checked them, though they were trembling visibly. Then he increased his gait a little. Coming up to those who had run, he signified that they were to hand him their weapons. As they did so, he handed them over, one at a time, to their comrades who had walked steadily. Then he picked up little sticks and gave them to the disarmed men.

When the savages grasped the import of this, those who had not run cackled with glee, while the others, filled with shame, begged to have their weapons returned. But the captain solemnly shook his head. He clapped the valiant ones on the back, signifying that only the bravest were fit to bear weapons. Nor did he return their arms until Gentry fired again. This time the roundshot whistled close by my ear, judging from the sound. It ricochetted from a palm tree and went screaming up and away over the forest toward Execution Knob, with a wail at the last to chill one's blood, but not a man stirred. Instead, one after another of the disarmed men thumped himself on the chest, looked the skipper full in the eye and held out his hand for his weapons.

"Ha!" said the captain. "I t'ink ve count on dem now."

"Too late for boarding, though," said Uncle George, nodding at the *Anthony Wayne*.

It was patent that Gentry now had no intention of anchoring opposite us. Instead, he fired one more shot, which did no damage, and then coming about, he steered for the western side of the cove. Heaving to at a point opposite the spot where the cannibals had disappeared, he then put a boat over, and, with six men at the oars, pulled in toward the shore. Within one hundred yards or so from the beach he stopped, and then he stood up in the sheets and held out his open palms in token of peace.

Not a man of us stirred; not a man spoke at first. Gentry's intentions were obvious to all. We had been balked in our attempt to capture the canoes and had also made a new horde of enemies; Gentry, fully cognizant of the situation, was now bent on making these enemies his allies.

For a time there was no response from the green depths of the woods. Growing impatient at last, Gentry then turned his boat back toward the *Anthony Wayne*. In a brace of shakes the poor savage, whom they had captured, was handed down into the gig. He was now tied hand and foot, and Gentry, pulling back to his former position, off the beach, stood up in the sheets and indicated his purpose with unmistakable gestures. He was plainly willing to give up the victim to his fiendish captors to gain their friendship and aid.

This time the response was forthcoming. "Skull Face," as the skipper had dubbed the cannibal chief, un-

doubtedly had recovered from his first fright and had seen that the ship was firing on us and not at his men. Now he stepped forward out of the trees—though not too far, for he probably was still thinking of my uncle's last lucky shot—and then, when Gentry gestured and shouted anew, the big chieftain stood up very straight, placed his left hand over his heart, and raised his right arm, with the palm held outward, full length above his head.

At this the poor captive in the boat wailed piteously, a long-drawn, quavering cry that might well have moved a wooden idol. But Gentry clouted him on the head, knocking him down into the bottom of the gig. Then he repeated the chief's gesture and nodded at his men to pull closer in.

A sob broke from one of our allies. It broke our silence, and all in a breath the natives we had so lately rescued were clamoring to attack. But the captain, pointing at our muskets, and then at the arms borne by the men in the boat, shook his head.

"Vun t'ing is diss," he said to Uncle George: "olt Skull Face has a score against us unt propaply he helps Chentry now. Dot means der ship shtill shtays, und vile she shtays dere is alvays hope ve gets her back."

At his orders, then, our allies picked up such sacks of provender as they could carry handily, threw the rest into the fire, and retreated with us toward our cavern. If Gentry attacked, we stood the best chance there; if not, then we could at least sortie.

CHAPTER XVI

SAVAGE AID

AS SOON as we reached the cave, where we were welcomed vociferously by our three wounded comrades, who had been waiting in a fever of apprehension and anxiety, O'Donnell was sent aloft on the bluff with a glass. He reported that the ship was now at anchor, that the wind had died away, and that most of the cannibals were now clustered about the gig, which had been drawn up on the shore near the canoes. Those canoes which we had set adrift, he said, had been hauled in; the prisoner he could not make out, but he said that Gentry had handed the chief a musket, which he was then examining, while some of the cannibals were passing around what he took to be a bottle of brandy.

What Gentry planned to do we could not of course tell with certainty; but if the treasure really lay near the falls,

The poor captive wailed piteously

as he had said, then, we reasoned, he would return to Drake's Bay as soon as the breeze came up again. Drake's Bay not only afforded the best anchorage, but it brought him closest to the falls; and, with his new allies, his prospects for gaining his object seemed to have been brightened immeasurably. In the meantime we were agreed that it would be folly for us to attack them in their present position.

"Let us hope they do attack!" cried the judge. "With these husky chaps to help—why, we'll give them the damnedest drubbing one could wish. You mark my words."

While we were away, it developed, the judge had gone out to see how things had fared with Gunderson. Dumphey and his three companions had regained the ship during the night and, as the judge had anticipated, had made no effort to remove their wounded comrade. He had lain all night at the foot of the slope, writhing in pain, and there the judge had found him. So, when our story was told, he asked that the poor fellow be brought to the cavern.

"Certainly," said the skipper. Forthwith my uncle was sent down, with four of the savages, to return presently with the groaning sailor on an improvised litter.

"I got what I deserves, sir," the man said weakly, when they had laid him down. "I thought it was a case of saving my own life, sir. Now——"

"Don't talk," said my uncle, kindly. "You must save your strength."

"Well, I've got to say I'd give a deal to show you what I feels," Gunderson persisted. "Them swabs!" And when he heard how Gentry had given back the poor savage to be eaten by the cannibals, he writhed with loathing. "Why, he'd eat some o' that hisself, sir, to gain an end, he would!" he cried.

Few of us gave him much chance for recovery; the man had been shot clean through, and he was now the color of wax. But we had not reckoned with our new friends.

As soon as they entered the cavern, the captain had bade them set down their sacks of provender and fall to eating. For this they were humbly grateful, and, running to the brook and drinking like men who had been traveling on a desert, they opened one of the sacks. This contained parched corn, sweet potatoes, a sort of pemmican, thick corn cakes, bunches of dried grapes, dried fish, and vegetables which resembled carrots and our onions. As we found by tasting, this food was palatable enough, save that most of it lacked the salt to which we were accustomed. Our savages downed it with gusto. They were also delighted with the bits of cheese, jerked beef and ship's biscuit which we gave them to sample.

But, while they were eating, their quick eyes were taking in everything in the place; and when the captain, by means of signs, told them that the rations they saw before them were all we had to subsist on, they made eager motions to assure us we need not worry on that score. As soon as they had finished eating, four of them picked up bows and arrows, pointed eagerly at the woods and, at the captain's nod, went over the barricade in a bound. Two others, noting our shattered clay pots, ran to the patch of clay at the back of the cavern and, after getting permission from the skipper, fell to shaping new utensils. And others, going to our wounded men, pointed first to the wounds, then at the forest, and then back at the fire, signifying that they would soon concoct remedies to ease them of their pain.

Being given permission to go, they returned shortly with some black gum, like tar, and a collection of herbs and palm leaves, as well as strips of bark and some bright red berries. All save the gum was placed in the coffee pot and brought to a boil over the fire.

As soon as it had cooled, Gunderson, Johannsen, the judge and Killifer were given a draught, which they took willingly enough, though with many grimaces. Within ten minutes all were sound asleep.

"Remarkable!" cried my uncle. "What's more, see how white and drawn they were—and all have better color already."

"And a natural sleep, too!" said O'Donnell, marveling. "Well, I've seen men with a drop in their grog a-breathin' like a hoss with the heaves, but nothin' like this. We can learn even from these swabs, I take it."

The four were no sooner asleep than the savages, with little crooning murmurs of sympathy, uncovered their wounds. One of them, in the interim, heated the black gum in a pannikin. While the stuff was still bubbling, they dipped it up on wooden paddles and smeared it over the wounds, after which they bound up the patients with palm leaves and strips of inner bark, showing a dexterity and tenderness that was admirable to behold.

During these ministrations not a patient so much as moved. They slept like little children. Moreover, not one of them awakened till the following morning, when all appeared wonderfully refreshed and declared that they felt nothing but a rather pleasant itching sensation around the surface of their wounds. Even Gunderson said that he believed he could now sit up—though, of course, he was not allowed to.

Nor was this all. The hunters, in the meantime, returned with two wild hogs and a small deer. These were speedily cut up, and hung on poles over the fire to smoke. Others brought back turtle's eggs, breadfruit, mangoes, luscious wild grapes, more clams, cocoanuts, and some tender vegetables which they called *bago*, resembling long radishes. All these things they brought in with an air of childish pride, looking to us like so many eager dogs, waiting to be patted.

"Why," said my uncle, "if we were left free to forage, we could live here a matter of years, with these chaps to show us the way of it."

OF ALL my memories of that island those of that day and the next are perhaps the most pleasant. The savages, who called themselves Usagos, proved excellent cooks, in their own way of doing. With a bit of coaching they rapidly picked up our own ideas of preparing food. So we feasted like kings and added enough stores on the second day to keep us a matter of two weeks or more. Moreover, we found our allies as interesting to watch as so many quick and eager monkies.

They manifested the keenest of interest in everything we had, and it was laughable to see them wondering and exclaiming over a watch or noting the play of a compass needle when settling.

It was also something to see when one of them filled a pipe, which O'Donnell loaned him, and made wry faces, signifying that the tobacco had burned his tongue; yet the same man, soon after, came in with some dried brown fluff, resembling that which our Indians call kinnikinick, rolled it in a yellow palm leaf and smoked away contentedly. They also found and chewed a sort of black, tender nut, which they took from a green husk like that of a walnut; and, though we found them very bitter to the taste, the Usagos preferred them to samples of our own "natural twist."

We made slow work at first of picking up their guttural jargon, save the names of objects, such as *bogo*, for sword, and *beez*, for spear; but by holding up objects, making signs, and drawing diagrams in the sand we came at last to a fair understanding. They were worshippers of the sun and lived on an island two days' travel to westward by canoe with fair, direct winds. Their enemies, whom they called Buscas, lived on another island to the north and west, and about the same distance. For these Buscas they expressed the deepest hatred and loathing, yet they declared that they were not afraid of them. Their own capture they explained by illustrating in pantomime. They had been hunting; they had fallen asleep, after a hearty feast, and, being only twenty in number, had been surprised by as many as sixty.

At first they could not understand why we had come to the island. Being shown a gold coin, they were immediately intrigued with the bas-relief portrait and the lettering thereon; but it was plain that they did not recognize it as a thing of value. Holding up their wrists and ankles, they showed where they had worn ornaments of the same metal. This, they indicated, they had taken from streams on their island in nuggets and had shaped it for mere ornamentation. Then, when they grasped the fact that we had hoped to take many such coins from this island and in pantomime had been shown what one such coin would purchase, one of them took my uncle by the arm.

Pointing toward the west, he took a few steps with Uncle George. Then he paused and threw his arms wide, as though to clasp my uncle to his bosom. Following this gesture, he took off my uncle's hat, held out his hand for the coin, dropped it into the hat, and made a motion as though heaping it full. And, picking up a pebble somewhat of the same color, he pretended to fill the hat over and over, thrusting it each time toward my uncle's hands.

"Plain enough!" cried my uncle. "If we will go with them, they will load us down with nuggets."

But here he shrugged helplessly, pointed westward, laughed, and flapped his arms like a bird flying.

The Usago understood, for he laughed in answer and, picking up one of our axes, showed with this, and a rough picture on the sand, how he and his fellows would shape a dugout if a tree large enough could be found. This heartened us mightily.

"Why," cried O'Donnell, "in some ways I'd as soon hide out till them swabs puts to sea. Them pirates and cannibals, I means. What's gold to a dead man, anyway, I says? Let 'em take the swag, and we try for the other island."

"Not much use hiding, if they take pains to find us," said Uncle George. "No, by Jophet! I have a feeling that somehow, someway, we'll do them yet and get the ship."

When we showed the Usagos the chart of the island, they were at first at a loss to know what to make of it. But when we pointed out Drake's Bay, and the peninsulas they had seen coming in, they understood. With many shakes of the head, they pointed at the lake, making signs to show that the water leaped up in fountains now and again while the earth trembled all round it. We took this to mean that volcanic disturbances occurred at the bottom on occasion, with earthquake tremors, and concluded that the island was not inhabited because the savages believed it to be cursed by evil spirits.

Meantime, we took turns watching Cannibal Cove from the bluff by day, and maintained a vigilant guard at night. Occasionally we could see the gig going and coming from the ship, while groups of cannibals staggered into view now and then, plainly drunk.

"I go down und get a look," said the captain, on the second morning. "Maype, if all is drunk, ve surbrise 'em some."

Nothing we could say would dissuade him from the risk, so he and my uncle set out. But they returned within the hour, saying that, drunk or not, old Skull Face maintained discipline.

But on that same day we made two important discoveries. The bluff face above the mouth of our cave, it will be remembered, rose perpendicularly for fifty feet or more. At the top a ledge overhung several feet. O'Donnell, who was aloft with a telescope, was moving about to stretch his legs and walked to the edge. A cracked fragment on which he stepped began to teeter with his weight, and he leaped back just in time. The great stone, weighing several tons, rocked a little, then settled back into place. Thereupon O'Donnell reported to the skipper; a stout pole was cut and taken up, and it was found that one man could easily tip the slab over.

"Ha!" chuckled the skipper. "Vot a surbrise dey get now if dey attack." And he looked below at the spot where the slab would probably strike. It was fairly in front of the cavern mouth.

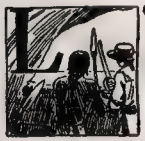
I made the other discovery. Chancing to look behind a huge rock at the back of the cavern, I found that it covered a hole. We rolled the rock away, and exploration disclosed the fact that we had unearthed a natural tunnel. There were some tight squeezes here and there, but no by-passages; and it wound on, and slightly upward to an exit on the west side of the knoll, some three hundred feet from the cavern.

"It vill help us scouting ven dey t'ink ve're cooped," said the skipper.

Meantime the *Anthony Wayne* did not move until noon observation. Then she weighed anchor and, with the canoes trailing, came sailing round Kidd's Mauley once more and up to a position opposite our cavern.

CHAPTER XVII

I SCOUT FOR TREASURE



ONG before the *Anthony Wayne* let go her anchor — which was at about two o'clock, or four bells — a warning shot from my uncle, aloft on the bluff, had brought in our last foragers, and all was made ready for an attack. My uncle remained on the bluff; the captain took the first watch at the barricade; and the rest of us, in two parties, stood ready behind the walls on either side of the breastworks.

My party, which included five of the Usagos and O'Donnell, took the right side; the judge and Killifer, who insisted they were quite able to fight, were on the left with the remaining six allies. Johannsen and Gunderson were placed behind them, though Johannsen grumbled audibly and swore he would be into it, leg or no leg, if they succeeded in boarding us.

But almost immediately we concluded that Gentry did not contemplate immediate hostilities. The cannibals came up the bay shouting drunkenly at their paddles and beached to the northeast of us behind the trees. A few of them came to the edge of the forest to shout at us; one planted a spear at the foot of the slope, with the head of their last victim upon it; but they soon had a fire going and could be heard chanting and gibbering in drunken abandon. Then, too, a gig put off from the ship. Gentry, the Busca chief, two of his cannibals, Dumphey, and three sailors were in it, and they were headed up toward the river's mouth, to northward.

It was then that I made a mad proposal. It seemed reasonable to believe that there would be no attack with the two chieftains away, and I was somehow certain that their trip had to do with the treasure.

"They're headed up to the waterfall, I'll wager," I argued. "Probably to make plans for the treasure's removal. They feel sure they have us bottled up. But why not let me spy on them and learn what I can?"

At first the skipper frowned. It seemed a mad risk; he did not want to expose me unnecessarily, nor weaken our party. But, I pointed out, I had an excellent chance to slip out behind the knoll through the tunnel; the Buscas were in all probability watching only the front of the cave, thinking we had no other outlet; and I was a good runner, and enough of a woodsman to take full advantage of cover. At last he yielded.

"I vouln't do it," he said, patting me awkwardly on the shoulder, with a suspicion of moisture in his eyes, "only —I haf a feeling you come back. Und *Gott* go mit you—jess."

Even as I had expected, there were no signs of the Buscas when I emerged from the tunnel. The knoll was now between me and them, and I ran down the slope to westward and plunged into the trees. There, safely hidden from their view, I turned northward till I ran into the trail we had so recently cut and headed westward again, intent on mounting the plateau.

For the sake of lightness I had taken only a musket, a pistol, a compass, and a few ship's biscuits. So I made rapid progress and within the hour was at the top of the plateau.

From there I had little trouble in reaching the falls. There were no vines to hinder me here; the footing was good, and the thunder of the tumbling waters served as a guide.

For caution's sake, I proceeded carefully when I neared the falls; for, though I reasoned that, if they were coming here, they would not hurry, as I had done, there was always the chance that I had miscalculated. The chart showed a great bend in the river between the falls and the mouth; according to this they had much the greater distance to travel; yet I had no means of knowing how far they would be able to row against the current, nor whether Gentry knew of a shorter route and a less precipitate slope to mount. But I reached my destination without mishap; to all appearances I was alone upon the plateau.

I was brought up standing the instant I came within view of the brink.

THE river, at this point, was about fifty feet wide. At the brink and extending up-stream was a rocky projection. It was shaped somewhat after the fashion of a ship, turned keel up, with the bows heading up-stream. This acted as a delta, splitting the stream in two. In length the projection was not over fifty feet, while the top of the ridge rose ten or twelve feet above the water; and it was approximately but ten feet through at the thickest part, so that the channel on the north side was about ten feet wide, and that on the south—the side on which I was standing—something near ten yards in width. Splitting at the beak of the delta, the blue waters raced through these channels pell-mell, plunging on and downward over the brink in two distinct falls to the rocks some seventy feet below.

Well, this in itself was nothing to marvel at; but there, on the northern

bank, where the pines grew in a thick wall down close to the water, I saw a great gap. There was an indentation in the bank opposite the end of the delta which had never been made by the water; and there were the stumps of several trees close by, with the ax marks, weather-beaten as they were, still plain upon them. But not a fallen trunk remained in sight. Why they had been cut down, where they had been taken to, and why they had been cut in this particular spot I could in no wise imagine.

Nor was this all. Just opposite the up-stream end of the projection, on the south bank, and about fifteen feet in from the edge of the channel, was a bluff. Well, in this low bluff, which was not over twenty feet high, someone had caused a sort of grotto to be hewed from the rocks. In this grotto was a wooden idol. It had been carved from blackest ebony, was about eight feet high, had a great hooked beak for a nose, and showed a great, ugly mouth, with the lips curled back from teeth which had been made from the inner surface of shells. I almost jumped when I looked at the eyes; for they were formed of green crystal, resembling emerald, and were as baleful in expression as those of a lynx staring at one from the dark depths of a cavern.

It was the bright, golden sunlight, of course, which caused those green depths to sparkle so; yet the effect was most uncanny. Wherever one moved in the arc before it the eyes of that hideous monster seemed to follow—and I could even imagine that there was a hint of sardonic mirth in those terrible orbs as the idol, which was squatted upon a carved dais, sat there with grimly folded arms and watched me move about.

At the feet of the thing was a little cone of human skulls, four in number, and a spear, a bow, a quiver of arrows, and a shield made of hide. These, by the appearance, had been there a long time. And behind the idol lay more weapons and more skulls. These had lain there for a much longer period, I judged, than the others, for some of the quivers were rotten with age.

So struck was I by these sights that for a moment I forgot my mission. But presently I was startled by the raucous screaming of a red-billed bird below me; and as it soared away over the trees, I crept close to the brink and peered below. Here and there I saw where steps had been hewn from the rock; and at a point about half-way down the steep slope, where the trees were thick, and on my side of the falls, I caught the gleam of a musket barrel.

There was no time for indecision. I had guessed true; the buccaneers were coming to the falls. Now I must either run or stay to see whatever was about to happen. Having come thus far, I elected to stay.

The face of the little bluff ran sheer to the brink of the falls. This left a flat beach, about fifteen feet wide, between it and the water. If the big chief and the buccaneers followed the line of the steps, after emerging from the trees—and this seemed likely—I reasoned that they would emerge on this beach. Hence I had two choices: to hide behind the idol, or mount the bluff from its footslope to westward. A hump back of the grotto would hide me from their view as they came up; and there were also thickets close to the edge to shield me when they reached the beach. So I selected the bluff and in a brace of shakes was hiding behind the thickets a little to westward of the idol and some ten feet above it.

CHAPTER XVIII

JERRY BLUNT'S CACHE

HAD not long to wait before Gentry and the big chief appeared. They made an unforgettable picture as they topped the rise—the chief a golden-skinned statue, quite naked save for his girdle and ornaments, and Gentry all decked out with a yellow silk shirt, a bright red head scarf, and a blue-and-white polka-dotted sash around his waist. I have yet to look upon two better specimens of physical development. The chief topped Gentry by half a head, and Gentry was a full six inches over six feet in height. The big savage was also scarred about the breast, with bony features as devoid of warmth as that of a grinning skull; yet, of the two, I had much rather have faced the cannibal.

Gentry's shirt was open at the neck, exposing a scarred and tattooed breast that reminded me of joined shields; his sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, showing his great forearms, with corded muscles as thick as a ship's hawser; and now, as he dashed the sweat from his hammered features, and twisted his eyebrows up into devil's horns, glaring quickly about him the while, I was sure that I had never looked upon a more formidable villain.

After one glance at the idol, which the chief saluted with a quick bend of the knee, both went to the river's edge and lay down for a deep drink. Dumphey, Horn, two other sailors, and the two cannibals followed one another up the steps a moment later, and they, too, hurried forward for a draught of the sparkling water.

And now I was treated to an agreeable surprise. I had feared that the roar of the falls would bother me in hearing them speak, but at the first word this fear vanished. With the close growth of the trees on every hand, I found that the acoustics were such that I heard them easily.

"Ah!" growled Gentry, standing up and resting his great right hand on the butt of a silver-mounted pistol in his sash. "That's better nor brandy, after all. How about it, old Marble Face?" And he looked at the chief and rubbed his belly, with a little smile.

The chief did not return the smile, though he grunted, "Huh!" and nodded. Then, with a look of fierce pride, he pointed at the statue, or idol, thence back to the river, and again at the end of the delta. Kneeling down, he drew something in the sand, crossed his wrists before him, made a motion as though binding them, pointed again at the stream, made a sweeping motion with his arm toward the falls, and then pointed once more at the up-stream prow of the delta. Then he stood back and folded his arms dramatically.

"What's he powwowing about?" asked Dumphey, coming up.

"Why," said Gentry, who had been nodding understandingly through the chief's demonstration, "here's the way of it, I take it. When they're to pick a chief they comes here. Well, as near as I can make out, they ups and puts him in a canoe up above, there, and him no paddle. Arms tied, too, mind you. If this here ebony god is feelin' right about the liver—which is hard to figger, if them eyes means anything—why that canoe goes smack against them rocks in the middle, there, and stays. If not—why, over the falls."

The others now came up, and Gentry must needs repeat the story to them.

"Ah!" exclaimed a seaman named Blake, a squat, hairy tar, with a cast

in one eye. "I wouldn't want to take that risk myself, not I."

"Nor I," growled Dumphey. "That eye in that there figgerhead a-lookin' on, too. *Brrr!* It fair gives me the creeps, a-lookin' at it."

"Well, at that, though," said Blake, "what's all that got to do with what we comes for?" The man's one good eye was burning in his head, and he looked all round about him eagerly. "Where's that blunt, is what I wants to know."

"Stow that!" Gentry snapped. "Who are you, Tom Blake, shovin' yourself forward so brash? Maybe you was wishin' to fall foul of me, by the Flying Dutchman! Well, if you do——"

"Avast, there, Cap'n!" Blake cried, taking a fearful step backward. "I was on'y askin'——"

"Well, then," Gentry cut in, in softer tones, "that's fair enough. But you see here, now: old Marble Face comes first, d'y'hear? You didn't want to fight no more, lest it was forced on you; you had your bellyfull, the lot of you, 'cept on'y Dumphey here, as I've made mate; and you're expecting these cannibals to do the bulk of your fightin' while you gets the blunt. That's about it, isn't it?"

"Well, that's one way of puttin' it," Blake admitted, grudgingly. "But you can't deny, sir, them swabs had the devil's luck."

"The devil's pluck, I'd call it!" snorted Gentry. "Ah, a fine lot you were to sail under the Jolly Roger! But here—there's old Marble Face a-standin' there a-waitin' and thinkin' I'm explaining what he did. Now all of you nod, like you understand, and make a powwow over him. Lively, now!"

All turned then toward the waiting chief, who still stood with his arms folded, and by signs and vigorous nods, with many fearful glances at the boiling stream, they hailed him as the bravest of the brave.

"And what now, sir?" said Blake, as the big chief, visibly flattered, stooped for the musket he had placed upon the sands.

"We'll wait till he gets through," said Gentry. "See them weppings afore that idol? Them, I take it, was the offerings he made afore taking that ride. Now, I guess, from what he tries to tell me below, he's going to make another."

They all stood quiet as the chief stepped forward toward the idol. Pausing before it, he looked at the musket, then quickly unslung a quiver and bow from his back. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he knelt, facing the idol, and, holding the bow and the quiver of arrows up on his outstretched palms, began a weird chant.

"Huh!" grunted Blake. "Makin' his chice atween the arrows and that gun for an offering reminds me of an ole skinflint I saw once in church. You'd've died laughing." And he chuckled now at thought of it. "Why, that man——"

But at this the chief looked round

He knelt facing the idol

with a frown, and Gentry spoke up angrily.

"Avast, there, Tom Blake!" he roared. "Now, I tells you fair; one more slip in that jaw tackle afore this is over, and I'll throw you over the falls. Make a mock of a man at his worship, would you? Especially this man, as will do our fightin' for us? By the Flying Dutchman, no! Kneel down, now, every man Jack of you!"

"What for?" growled Blake.

"What for? To show him we ain't a-makin' fun o' him, that's what for!"

"Well, all right," said Blake. "I guess it won't hurt us."

And he, with the others—save one man—kneeled with Gentry on the ground.

WONDER of wonders! The exception was Horn—a grizzled old drunken seaman, with his face badly marked by gunpowder, brass ear-rings dangling beside his leathery neck, and his cheek bulging with tobacco! Now he spat into the dirt, shifted from one leg to the other, and gave a hitch at his broad leather belt.

"Cap'n," said he, "there's things I draw the line at, and this is one. 'Tain't pious."

"Pious?" cried Gentry. "Who said it was? It don't mean a thing."

"Does to me," said Horn stubbornly. "I didn't say nothin' when that poor swab was a-given back for duck soup—though it give me a turn I ain't forgot—but this here stops me dead, it do. Kneel to a wooden idol? Not me. It ain't right, and it ain't pious, and afore I do it may I be keel-hauled!"

"Well, then," said Gentry, with unexpected gentleness, "turn your back, then. I ain't for forcin' a man's hand in matters o' religion."

"Thankee, sir," said Horn, turning about. "But mark my words, Cap'n, I read about that once in the Bible, and if good comes of it, may I be scuttled."

But Gentry waved his hand angrily, and the chief, facing the idol once more, continued his chant. Then, finishing abruptly, he laid his bow and arrows at the feet of the image, picked up his musket, and faced about.

"Huh!" he grunted.

"Which I suppose means thankee," said Gentry, arising. "Now, lads, since that's over, I'll tell you what Jerry did with the treasure." Saying which, he reached into his shirt, and pulled out a packet.

All the buccaneers crowded round him eagerly as he pulled out a sheet of heavy parchment. The chief and his two henchman also pressed forward so that all were placed in a close group, not far from the river's edge.

"You see that paper?" said Gentry, holding it out.

"Aye, by thunder!" cried Blake. "Why, there's the falls, as pretty as a pitcher, sure enough. Drawed out by a smart man, that were."

"Ah," growled Dumphey, "but you are right there! Smart he was when I sailed with him, was Jerry Blunt—a smart man, and no mistake."

"Well," said Gentry to the man Horn, "you take it and read what it says below there."

"Why," said Horn, with a shamefaced grimace, "that's hand of write."

"Thought you said you could read?" cried Gentry. "Leastways, you said you read in the Bible."

"That were print," said Horn.

"Well, then," said Gentry, "any of the others? You wanted to see where the treasure is, you did, so one of you read it out."

Neither Blake nor the remaining seaman could read, it appeared; and

though the new mate, Dumphey, reached for the paper, Gentry waved his hand.

"You can read it out to 'em later, if you doubts," said he. "Here's the way of it, men, and you can see it in a minute. What do you suppose them trees was cut down for?"

"Why, I've been a-wondering about that right smart," said Blake.

"Well you might," said Gentry. "But they was cut down for a dam, that's what. Can't you see now how he had 'em laid, from that niche in the bank he had dug over to the upper end, there, of that projection? Why, it was easy as easy. Only a ten foot stretch, you see. The logs overlapped; water pushed 'em tight; dirt and rocks did the rest. So all of it was shunted —the water, I mean—over into this south channel."

"And the treasure?" cried Horn.

"Why, where's your head, man? Under the falls, to be sure. Ah, by the Flying Dutchman! but that were a prime dodge. Once the water is stopped, he had them niggers pick out a cavern down below, and there he stowed the blunt. That being done, why, they knocked down the dam—and there's your treasure hidden till another dam is built. It's all told there, in that part of the chart I cuts away."

"But when do we get at it?" cried Blake. "Couldn't we let old Marble Face here hold 'em in the cave whiles we lifts this blunt?"

"Hold 'em?" roared Gentry. "Now, you see here, Tom Blake: you're goin' to help out fightin' for this blunt, or you'll go to the yard arm, now mark me on that. Hold 'em in? You've had a sample o' that Dutchman's guts —aye, and the rest of 'em ain't much behind him. You won't hold 'em more'n a day or so, I'll gamble; and then, with them prowlin' around this island in a game o' hide and seek, I reckon they'd give an account of themselves."

"Well, I ain't said I wouldn't fight, have I?" growled Blake. "I was on'y a-suggestin', like."

"You can keep your suggestions for the fo'c'sle, my lad!" said Gentry. "I tell you flat I've a sweat on me now expecting each minute to hear the guns a-going down below. If that Dutchman were to come chargin' out again, I wouldn't bet two coppers but what he routed the lot of them. No, sir. It's him who attacks as has the bulge; and only for you wantin' to see for yourselves, and old Marble Face wanting to salve this wooden figgerhead here, probably for to change his luck, we'd have attacked this very day."

"And what will we do with 'em—them what's left, I mean?" said Horn.

"Do with 'em?" cried Gentry. "Leave 'em to old Hi-cock-a-lorum here, that's what!"

Perhaps it was my involuntary shudder; perhaps it was my carelessness; but at all events a little rock was dislodged at this juncture and tumbled down from my little precipice to the ground below. Striking another rock there, it glanced and bounded out toward the group.

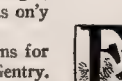
Only two of them turned on the instant, but Blake gave a startled cry, and I knew that they would be atop that bluff in another minute. So I pushed my musket forward and fired, without pausing to do more than throw the gun to my shoulder.

I had taken no aim; but Blake pitched forward on his face, while the chief bellowed with rage and pain, throwing up an arm from which the blood was streaming. In the same breath I was on my feet and running like a deer to southward.

Several things favored me, or I would never have lived to tell the narrative. The very suddenness of the shot had sent them plunging in all directions, for they doubtless thought, during one horrid moment, that they had been ambuscaded again. Before they could realize that I was alone, I was in flight. Furthermore, they had the bluff to mount, and by the time the first shot was fired at me I was dodging in and out among the pines along the eastern edge of the plateau. Several bullets whistled perilously close, but these only served to increase my speed, and, as they had all been drinking heavily, I had soon left them in the lurch.

CHAPTER XIX

BARNABY REVOLTS



FEELING assured of this at last I whipped into the brush for a brief breathing spell. But I had been lying there but a moment or two, it seemed to me, when I heard the thump of heavy feet just above me, and someone breasting a thicket. I also heard Gentry's voice hailing in the distance.

Instantly alert, I lay as quiet as a mouse, my heart pounding heavily against my ribs. It was impossible for me to see through the growth immediately before me; and it was from that direction that the sounds had come. My only hope, I reasoned, lay in locating my enemy's exact position before jumping up, for if I moved, and he saw me first, there would be little doubt about the outcome.

So for a moment there was an absolute quiet in the forest about us, save for the thrumming of the insects and the sough of the leaves in the gentle breeze. My enemy had paused on his own account, and I knew he must be listening as intently as I.

The silence was broken by another hail from Gentry. It came to me faintly and eerily, as though it were a ghostly echo from the stark heights of London Tower, baking there in the glaring sunlight to northward.

"Horn!" came the hail. "Come about, Barnaby, and let him go." Then, after a pause: "You can't find him in that jungle, you swab! All hands back to lay aboard ship!"

Not a sound came from the man who had pursued me. That is, in answer to Gentry's hail. But suddenly I heard a stealthy movement near me and Horn panting heavily to regain his breath.

A second later and I would have been aiming toward him, but he spoke in a guarded, husky whisper.

"Jack!" he called, imploringly. "Mister Jack! I knows you must be here, some'eres. I seed you duck, I did. I'm done with them swabs, Jack, if I can go back to my dooty."

There was no time to dilly-dally. Gentry might decide to follow after him at any minute.

"Horn," I said, "if you're honest in this, face north, with hands up. Quick, now—I am aiming at you."

This was not literally true, since I could not see him and was aiming only at the place where I judged him to be standing; but he spoke up at once, saying, "Aye, aye, sir!" and I stepped out. He was standing some twenty feet away, faced to the north, with his hands aloft and his musket on the ground beside him.

I had no sooner picked up his musket than, "Jack," he cried huskily, wheeling about, "you take a look at my deadlights, son. Ah! But I do be a sick man at heart, Jack, to think

as I ever had truck with the likes o' them. A man must live, Jack, and there didn't seem to be no hope, and I deserted; but, Jack, my stummick do be full up o' them, by thunder! Did you see 'em, there, a-kneelin' to that heathen idol?"

In one sense I was tempted to laugh aloud. This rum-soaked old sailor, with bleary, powder-marked features, was certainly one of the last men on earth, I thought, to retain any religious scruples. But one never can tell exactly what queer kinks he will encounter in the minds of men, I have found; and it was patent that old Barnaby was in deadly earnest.

"I saw them!" I said. "And now, Barnaby, here's your gun."

He seized my hand then in his gnarled, old horny fist—the palm was as rough as a file—and two big tears rolled down his cheeks.

"By thunder, boy, you won't regret that!" he cried hoarsely. "No, you won't. I'll count it a pleasure, a privilege, by thunder, to finish my days with true seamen. I——"

"Never mind that, Barnaby," I interrupted. "We've got to budge."

"Right you are, sir!" he returned quickly, dashing his hand across his eyes.

Just then another hail came from Gentry.

"Jack!" said Horn, "we'll fool him, maybe." Forthwith he whipped out his pistol and fired a shot into the air. "There," he continued, "maybe he'll think I got it."

Two or three more hails came ringing across the plateau; but we did not wait longer, taking up a dog trot toward the downward trail.

"If they look around for me," Horn panted, "why, that'll delay them that much longer gettin' back. And we've got to get there first, for they'll be on us, sure as shootin', after this."

On the way Horn told me that Gentry and Dumphey had even gone ashore in Cannibal Cove while the cannibals were dancing around the fire at their feast. He had dared to tell Gentry then that no good would come of it, he said; and, reckoning up, he said that Blake's death and his own departure had reduced Roaring Bill's crew to ten able men. Only two of the wounded, he said, were left alive aboard the ship.

We did not encounter any of the cannibals scouting in the woods behind our knoll and reached the tunnel at about half past four. We had not heard a single shot during the trip.

You may well imagine the welcome I received when I stepped into the cave. Horn, on the other hand, coming in sheepishly behind me, was greeted with a frown from Killifer and a prolonged stare from the judge; but I acted as spokesman for him.

"Vell," said the skipper finally, "I take him back."

"Ah!" cried Horn, fervently. "I'll prove I can be trusted this time."

"Goot," said the skipper. "Ve see pooty soon, anyvay."

The location of the treasure aroused some discussion, the judge suggesting that we might gain by moving out that night and taking position at the falls, where we could keep the buccaneers from working at the necessary dam. But the skipper shook his head. From my description he judged that we could not fortify the place so well as the cave; we would have at least three sides to guard, where here we had but one, and we could accomplish as much by sorties, with the cave as a base.

"Anyvay," he said, "dere's a lot of daylight yet. Und he may attack dis afternoon."

We had not long to wait before we received proof of this. My comrades had not been molested during the afternoon, save for an occasional arrow whizzing into the cavern, and during my absence the skipper had ordered a further strengthening of the barricade. The Usago's leather shields, with their circular wooden frames, had been placed on top, and banked with dirt behind them, leaving semi-loop-holes or notches for us to shoot through; and when the afternoon shadow from the bluff had crept well down the slope, I looked through one of the apertures and saw the gig returning. Both Gentry and the cannibal chief were bawling orders across the water to ship and beach. The furious tones told a plain story.

CHAPTER XX

CANNON BALL AND ARROW

"HA!" grunted the skipper. "Now comes der fun."

He took his pipe, with its porcelain bowl, from his mouth, polished it carefully, and laid it lovingly in a far corner.

"I don't vant it shoult be proken," he said to my uncle. Then he looked around. "Here is enuff logs und dirt to holt der shot dis time from dem cannon, I t'ink," he said. "Efery man to a port-hole, now. Mr. Pellew, you und de chudge und O'Donnell, to de left—jess. Jack, Killifer, und Horn, de right. So. Spread out und leave room for dese other fellows in between. So. I take de middle. Und keep down, now, till I gifs de vord."

We were shortly in position as he wanted us, each white man with a cutlass stuck into the sand beside him, and the extra muskets leaning against the inner side of the barricade, all loaded and ready to hand. Our pistols were thrust into our belts, and each held a musket firmly gripped—and loaded, by the captain's direction, with bird shot as well as musket balls. The Usagos, meantime, had stuck their two-handed swords and spears before them in the sand and stood ready with bows and arrows.

"Cap'n," cried Gunderson from the corner, "prop me up, sir, and gimme a pistol. I want a whack at them swabs if they comes in."

At the skipper's nod, Horn and I placed the big, square-faced seaman with his back to the cavern wall and left a pistol in his thick, scarred hands. It was a heavy, double-barrelled weapon, and he gazed upon it affectionately.

"If I had any wish," he said, "it would be you leave that Donovan—or Gentry, he calls hisself—come through. I'll blow his belly out through his spine, so help me!"

Horn and I would have run back to our positions had the skipper not cautioned us.

"Shteady," he said. "No hurry. Shteady and cool is vot do it, my poys." And, when we were in place, "Jack," he said, "you keep vatch on dot site, und Mr. Pellew on der left. So."

I was glad of the opportunity to peer out, for crouching there on one knee was trying.

This time the ship was anchored a little farther out. But her broadside was presented as before, and I must own that my spine prickled when I noted the frowning muzzles of those four long nines pointing directly at me. It is one thing to figure errors in depth and dispersion on paper, but quite another to consider the possibilities when facing the guns.

However, one thing was made immediately plain. Only two men remained aboard to touch them off, for

Gentry, Dumphey and six others were now pulling ashore in a gig, all carrying extra muskets. Gentry doubtless had given over hopes of reducing our barricade by cannon fire and intended to use them only in hopes of a lucky hit and to lend encouragement to the cannibals.

The gig disappeared behind the trees near the cannibal's fire. Then a great shout arose; the savages began beating on kettle drums, and, here and there, I could see buccaneers and yelling cannibals dodging into position along the northern side of the fan-shaped slope.

"See any on der sout' site?" asked the skipper.

"None," I said. And Uncle George also shook his head.

"Dey come from der nort'east, as before," said the captain. "Shteady now. If dey starts ven der guns open up, don't be oxcited. Ve let dese Usagos shoot arrows so fast dey can yoost so soon dey start, but ve hold our fire till dey is close in."

I glanced about me and noted the aspect of my comrades. All were somewhat nervous; nothing else could have been expected. But their mouths were tight, and their eyes blazed. As for the Usagos—I might have laughed under other circumstances. Their eyes were popping; they could not keep still; and they gave vent to little guttural cries, or whined like puppies, or spat into the sand and performed a weird sort of shuffling dance, with their gums bared and their hands working in short circles at their sides. The beating of the kettle drums and the shouts below them had acted on them like wine, and it was impossible to keep them from bobbing up to peer over the barricade.

Ten minutes or more dragged by in this manner.

"Damn it!" said the judge. "Why don't they come?"

Then suddenly a whistle blew sharp and clear; the tomtoms took up a frenzied tattoo; and with a terrible shout the horde of cannibals broke from the trees and started swarming up the slope.

At the same time we were greeted with the crash of musketry; and, one after the other, three guns aboardship thundered, and their heavy missiles came shrieking through the air.

The first cannon ball struck fair in the center of the breastworks, but below the line of shields. A great cloud of dust was spanked aloft by the hit, while a shower of sand was thrown up by another which landed just below us on the slope. The third shot whipped through just above the barricade, with a wail like a lost soul. It struck the wall at the rear of the cave with a tremendous crash, knocking down a shower of rock.

In the same space of time several musket balls chugged into the logs before us, and others ripped viciously through the leather shields. Nor were they without effect. I heard the judge cry out sharply, while the Usago beside me clapped a hand to his cheek and brought it away streaming with blood.

In that brief instant we might well have lost the fight. Bedlam reigned. The reports of the long nines were re-echoing back and forth between the bluff and the ridge on Blackbeard's Boot; the kettle drums were being pounded by madmen; and what with the terrifying howls of the cannon balls, the vicious spat of the slugs from the muskets, and the bloodthirsty yells from the cannibals, we were in a fair way toward being stampeded.

"Shteady!" roared the skipper. "All hands up."

Suddenly I was as cool as ice, and, I think, my shipmates were similarly affected by the captain's coolness. The cannibals were coming on in bounds up that steep slope; the buccaneers fired again and again from the edge of

The rock came crashing down.

the trees till their allies spread out across their line of fire; then they, too, leaped out on their own account, all carrying cutlases and shouting wildly; but not a one of my shipmates fired. All waited for the word.

In the meantime our Usagos were not inactive. They were firing arrows into the pack with a rapidity that amazed me. They snatched an arrow from the quiver before them, fitted it to the string, drew it back till the head touched the bow, fired, and reached for another arrow, all in one continuous motion. And their marksmanship was amazing, too. The cannibals had not come twenty yards from the trees when I saw one pluck at his breast and fall, and others were sent kicking and howling to the ground as they came on. But still they continued to come, a howling horde of drunken devils, with their gigantic chief raging like a madman at their head.

THEN, when they were a full halfway up the slope, the skipper barked the order to fire.

The effect of our broadside could not have been bettered. At least five went down, while others, struck by the scattering bird shot, screamed and faltered. Immediately we were pouring lead into them from the remaining muskets, each man firing as fast as he could pick up a gun and aim.

Then, to add to their confusion, the fourth cannon aboardship roared, and the ball struck fair in the midst of the thickest part of their line, not thirty yards from the barricade. At least two must have been killed instantly, while several more were struck by flying rocks or blinded by the shower of dirt.

This catastrophe must have taken the heart out of a full third of them. Screaming with fright, they scattered to right and left or started running for their lives toward the trees.

When this happened some of the foremost, with the chief among them, were within five yards of us. His followers, who had converged, were charging in behind, strung out over ten yards or more of ground. And just then Johannsen's rock came crashing down, bringing with it a deluge of smaller pieces.

Four—as we counted afterward—were smashed flat under the slab. Two or three more were knocked down by smaller rocks. But this, with the cannon shot fired into their backs, and a volley of arrows and pistol balls, sent another score howling back down the slope.

I had but a heart-beat in which to realize this when the big chief and eight or nine more were leaping up the barricade upon us.

In spite of our previous luck, our fate, in that instant, hung perilously near the wrong side of the scales. O'Donnell was writhing on the ground with a spear through his breast. Two of the Usagos were dead; the judge had been wounded with a musket ball in the left arm; and while our enemies swarmed up the breastworks, Gentry and his buccaneers were halfway up the hill.

My heart, as the saying goes, had turned to lead. A second before we had been firing behind cover; now we came to grips in a raging, howling hurly-burly of shots, cries, screams, and clashing steel, with reinforcements for the enemy coming up to make an end of us.

Had we fallen back, had we wavered an instant, all would have been lost. But above all that infernal roar came a desperate bellow from the skipper which turned the tide.

"Charge 'em!" he yelled, as the big chief mounted the barricade; and instantly, for all his weight, he had leaped upon the breastworks and chopped down the nearest enemy.

This acted powerfully upon the Usagos, who had abandoned their bows and arrows for swords or spears. With a wild yell they bounded up after the skipper; and the rest of us, with pistols and cutlases, were after them on the instant.

The big chief hung poised above me as I lunged. His spear was drawn back for a thrust that would have pierced me through and through. My pistol ball, fired with the left hand, struck him full in the breast. He staggered, but I fended his spear just in time with my cutlas, for with his last spasm he lunged forward. Down he came tumbling, like a big bullock, and I used him for a step to mount the barricade. As I did so O'Donnell staggered part way up, fired a pistol with his last gasp, and struck the cannibal before me in the leg. He howled and pitched backward to the ground. Horn, scrambling up beside me, was knocked down by a brute with a two-handed sword; but a Usago finished the cannibal with a ripping spear thrust from below. In the next heart-beat four more went down—one within the cavern, two on the breastwork, one on the outside. The only remaining cannibal turned and ran for his life.

Thunderstruck by this turn of events, three of the buccaneers also turned and fled. The others halted, uncertainly, about thirty yards from us. Gentry raved like a berserker before them, with a pistol in one hand, and a cutlas in the other; but he bellowed in vain. Uncle George whipped up his pistol and sent a ball whistling through the side of Gentry's yellow silk shirt, and the man behind him spun crazily and pitched to the ground. All of the remaining buccaneers, including Dumphey, turned and flew for the trees.

Gentry paused a moment still, shaking his cutlas at us. I will long remember that ugly, distorted visage, with the bloody patch on one cheek and the slash of a mouth set like the jaws of a wolf trap.

"I'll get you yet!" he roared suddenly. "I'll feed every man Jack of you to these niggers if I have to stay here a year!"

Shifting quickly to dodge a spear thrown by one of the Usagos, he lifted his pistol and fired both barrels, quick as winking; and Uncle George grunted and fell back against the skipper. Then Gentry turned and ran back down the hill. We were forced to let him go in safety, for my uncle's shot had been our last, and he was gone before we could reload.

Quite out of hand for the moment, our Usagos now ran out and fell upon the wounded cannibals. They had expected no quarter, and they gave none. Of the twenty-three who had fallen near the barricade, not one was left alive for more than a minute after Gentry ran.

Meanwhile I ran to my uncle. I found that the pistol ball had cut through his left breast muscles and out under the arm pit. He had also been gashed in the right side with a spear and was bleeding from another cut in the calf of his left leg. His wounds were not necessarily fatal, I could see, but he was very pale and no longer to be counted on as a combatant. The judge was also painfully wounded for the second time; the bullet had passed clean through the biceps of his left arm, barely missing the bone; and, though he insisted on helping Uncle George back behind the breastworks, he fainted dead away as soon as we had set my uncle down.

Nor was this all. Killifer's old wound had reopened, and he had suffered another gash in the left shoulder. O'Donnell was stone dead, as were two of the Usagos. A third Usago, with his skull split, lingered for some hours but never recovered consciousness. Three of them had minor wounds, but one had been so severely wounded in the left arm that we feared amputation would be necessary.

I had expected to see Horn lying stiff as well as O'Donnell; but here I was agreeably surprised. I found him sitting up behind the barricade, with blood flowing from a scalp wound, but no more than a little dazed. A dash of water and a drink of brandy quickly brought him round again. He had fended off the cannibal's blow with his cutlas, he said, and so only received a glancing crack, probably with the flat side of the blade.

Gunderson, who declared with savage satisfaction that he had shot at least one cannibal from his corner, and Johannsen, who hobbled down soon afterward from the cliff, to be greeted with hearty cheers, had also escaped without further injuries. But there now remained only the skipper, Horn, myself and six of the Usagos who could be counted on as fit combatants.

CHAPTER XXI

BARNABY TAKES A CHANCE

AS A matter of precaution the skipper, Horn and I reloaded all the firearms, while the Usagos busied themselves caring for the wounded. But we were not attacked again that afternoon. The buccaneers and the cannibals remained out of sight behind the trees on the beach at the north side of the opening, and were doubtless busy enough, as the skipper declared, picking the bird shot from their hides.

However, our situation was now extremely serious. The morrow was coming; and even the skipper agreed that we would be hard put to it to withstand another attack. So, while the dusk fell, and the bats came down in a great swarm from their burrows in Execution Knob, grinning hideously down at the dead as they flew slothfully toward the palms, we held a grim council.

There was one hope, we were agreed, and this lay in the possible departure of the cannibals. Their chief was dead; nothing but disaster had befallen them since they came to the

island. Moreover, there was the cannon shot which had been fired into their backs. We were fairly certain that this had been the result of an accident or carelessness, but it remained to be seen whether or not Gentry would be able to explain it to the savages.

"If he can explain it," said my uncle, "there'll be a serious how-do-you-do, and no mistake. Though one thing's plain: we can count on these Usagos, I'll gamble, to the last man."

This was plain enough, indeed. They had sobbed like children over their dead; but, pointing to them and again at the woods, they signified, by sweeping their hands across their throats and holding up their fingers, that they hoped to get at least ten of the cannibals for each one.

"Vell," said the skipper at last. "Ve can't mofe our wounded, dot's plain. If dey gome again, ve fight, dot's all. So now I shtart to gif dese fellows instructions how to use dese muskets. Jess."

Now, up to this time, Horn had said very little. But now he spoke up.

"Cap'n," said he, "I've a word to say, sir, by your leave."

"Vat iss it?" said the skipper.

"Why," said Horn, "here's the way of it, I take it. I see fires down there, and they've got liquor. Them cannibals, I mean. It's my opinion they won't be hasty to leave, sir, while that's available—not them. Anyway, whichever way you take it, what do we gain by a-waitin' to see which way the wind blows? Nothin' as I can see. So I'd like to try somethin' of my own."

"Vell, let's hear it."

"See down there?" said Horn, pointing. "Two fires. One is the cannibals', and there's most of Gentry's swabs around the other, I'll gamble. Now, there ain't nothin' they'd stop at, so what I would do is this: lemme sneak around down there. They haven't seen me here, for I was down behind the breastwork afore Gentry could get a look at me, I take it. They think maybe Jack plugged me this afternoon. Well, this here scalp'll bear it out, and if I can make out to get aboard that ship, they'll never get her again."

The skipper answered not a word for several seconds.

"Cap'n," said Horn, leaning forward in his earnestness, "I know what you're a-thinkin' of. I know I deserted once. Who knows better? But look what I shows this very day. Now, I tell you it'll be easier than you think, if there's on'y two or three left aboard. I'll borry the gig from Gentry to get aboard, so's I can dress my head, d'y'see. And them aboard—they won't suspect me—and then—" He made a suggestive movement with his knife.

Still the skipper held silence, studying the face of the seaman intently.

"It's the best chance we has," Horn urged. "And, see here, sir: let Jack work his way down with me. We can take a look at the lay o' the land together, and if it ain't right, why we can come back."

For my own part, I was convinced at once that the risk was preferable to waiting for future events. Nor had I any fear that Horn was merely seeking another chance to desert us. I had seen him defy Gentry and had also noted his fearlessness in the fray during the afternoon.

"I hope you'll let us go, Captain," I said. "It's only following your own contentions; nothing risked, nothing gained."

"All right," said the captain, suddenly. "Yo go—und *Gott* go mitt you."

We were soon ready; and, with a hard grip of the hand all round, Horn and I departed through the tunnel.

BY THIS time it was black as pitch, and we had some trouble in rounding the knoll and picking our way to the northeast through the trees. But there was always the glare of the fires on the beach to guide us; and within the hour we had picked our way round in a wide detour and had come down within sight of the smaller blaze to northward. Crawling forward carefully, we saw Dumphey and three buccaneers growling in talk about this blaze, while the cannibals were ranged round the larger fire a short distance to southward.

One cannibal, who stood with his back to us, was delivering some sort of oration, with many savage gestures, and almost immediately we received an explanation of its import.

"I wish the cap'n would shake a leg with them muskets," growled one buccaneer. "I tell you I ain't much stomach for this, or that."

"Stomach?" snorted Dumphey. "No, I guess not. You'd run and leave that blunt, would you? Why man, think of it—you'll be drunk as a lord the rest of your life when we gets out of this."

"Aye—if we do," the man returned. "What good is blunt to me if I'm dead as bilge? I tell you that shot in the back didn't go down with these swabs, and small wonder."

"Well, ain't the old man got 'em pacified?" cried Dumphey. "Hear there, now? He's coming." And we, too, heard the oarlocks in the darkness between us and the dim lights of the ship. "He'll be here with them muskets pretty quick, my hearty," the pirate mate continued, "and then we'll see what's what. Once they get their hands on them, and we teach 'em how to use 'em—well, you'll be thankful you're sailin' under a man as has backbone and something more for a head than a jellyfish, by Judas!"

"That may all be," said another, with a bitter curse, "but I never see such rotten luck on nary cruise I've sailed. But for that shot—yes, even with the rock a-tumblin' down—why, they'd 'a' had 'em."

"Well, I couldn't help a hang fire, could I?" cried another man, with some truculence.

"You might've swiveled her," growled Dumphey.

"After she hung fire?" cried the cannoneer. "Why, how'd I know she might blow up or somethin'? Not I. I touched a light to that there touchhole, and when it didn't go off I was done. Musta been a little wet chunk there, just enough to hold it back. And then, *bang* she went."

"Aw," one of his mates broke in, with an empty, drunken laugh, "we've overhauled them words a dozen times. What's done is done. Let's have another go at the rum and leave what's astern astern."

Barnaby now edged nearer and placed his mouth close to my ear.

"Jack," he whispered, "so soon as I see how many's with Gentry, I'm a-goin'. If so be it my story won't wash, you'll never let 'em torture me, Jack? You'll shoot straight as straight, my lad?"

My heart sank at the prospect.

"Barnaby," I whispered in return, "it's too much to risk. Let's give 'em a broadside and run for it."

"No, Jack," he replied, firmly. "It's the biggest and best chance we got. Why, with no ship we might be here years. No, boy, I'm a-goin'. And

"Who goes?" roared Gentry, wheeling suddenly

would it be askin' too much if you was to say a prayer for me?"

This I promised readily, and within a minute the gig beached. Gentry summoned all hands to carry muskets, and the whole party came up into the firelight with the arms. They were now seven in all.

"Jack," whispered the old seaman, "that there leaves but two aboard. I'm a-goin'. Now, if I takes the ship, mind, I'm pullin' back with the gig a ways, but not clear in. I'll be a-singin' when I comes. Then all you has to do is slip down in the dark and swim out to me."

And with no further words he arose, crept back a trifle, emerged on the beach, and walked boldly forward into the firelight.

"Who goes?" roared Gentry, whirling suddenly. Then, as he recognized Horn, "Why, it's Barnaby!" he cried.

"Ah," said Barnaby, a bit thickly, leaning on his musket, "I wouldn't 'a' found my way back, save for these fires, not I. Where have I been, sir? A-layin' up atop o' that plateau a goodish while, where that yonker cracked me."

"That's the way I figgered it," said Dumphey.

"And the more fool you was for not comin' back when I called," said Gentry. "You remember me hailin' you, don't you?"

"Aye, sir," Horn admitted, "but Blake were my messmate, and I were main set on scuttling that young swab, I were. But here I be sir, and all well save for the crease he gave me. And now—what's happened, sir?"

"What's happened?" Gentry laughed with a touch of bitterness in his tones. "We tried to lay aboard 'em, Barnaby, and they give us a bastin', that's what."

"No!" cried Barnaby.

"Yes," said Gentry. "There's a score or more of these swabs of Buscas a-layin' up there now." And he gave Horn a brief outline of the affray. "So now," he continued, "there's one or two here wants to cut and run for it. But that's not me, by the Flying Dutchman!" He shook his great mallet-like fist in the air toward the cavern. "I tell you," he cried, "we'll have that blunt now if I has to haul the long nines ashore to do it. I've got these swabs pacified—partly, anyway—and you see, now, when I gives 'em these guns. Once they know how to use 'em—well, you'll see." Here he clapped Dumphey on the back, adding, "Drink up, now, and we'll proceed with the ceremony of presentation. Here, Barnaby! You need a calker, I shouldn't wonder."

"I do, and no mistake," said Barnaby, downing his drink; "and, Cap'n, if you don't mind, I'd like for to go aboard a few minutes. It's to dress up this head, d'y'see."

"All right, Barnaby," Gentry agreed. "Here, lemme look at your head first."

Barnaby slipped off the handkerchief, and Gentry gave vent to an exclamation of surprise. He had noted the Usago dressing.

"Why, by the Flying Dutchman!" he cried. "What's all this black gum. Where'd you get that?"

"Got it off a tree," said Barnaby. "My head was that hot, and I thought it would cool it."

"You thought, eh?" snorted Gentry. "Get yourself aboard ship for a lubber, Barnaby. Lucky you are if you haven't poisoned yourself. You tell that nigger aboard to wash this stuff off, and you'll find a jar of salve on the cabin table. But be back here with the gig as soon as you get fixed shipshape, mind."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Barnaby, readjusting his scarf.

"Oh, yes," said Gentry, looking toward the cannibals' fire, "I see their keg is drained. Fetch a keg o' brandy, Barnaby."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the old seaman, moving off toward the gig.

Now, during this talk I had scarcely dared to breathe. But when I saw Barnaby depart, my heart seemed to swell to twice its normal size. So far our mad venture had received the blessing of Providence.

AS SOON as Barnaby pushed off into the darkness, Gentry summoned his men, and, bearing the muskets, they stepped over to the Buscas' fire.

The cannibals, falling silent, rose up from their haunches—many staggering as they did so—and grouped themselves behind the man whom I took to be their temporary chieftain. There still were over thirty of them, but several of these were bearing minor wounds.

At Gentry's direction the muskets were stacked before the new chief. Then the pirate stood back, placed his right hand on his heart, and waved his left toward the guns with an eloquent gesture.

The new cannibal leader had been standing with his arms folded across his mighty breast, but even he forgot his dignity at this and snatched up a musket with a cry of delight. His men, meanwhile, fairly fell over one another in their eagerness to handle the new weapons. In a minute they were laughing, shouting, cocking the pieces, pulling triggers, and dancing round the buccaneers like frenzied children.

"You see?" said Gentry, when their

first exuberance had somewhat spent itself. "They only about half understood what the devil was hitting them. Wait till they knows how to use them."

Here the chief stepped up to Gentry, pointed at the muzzle of his musket, and then at one of the buccaneer's powder horns.

"They knows the way of it," said Dumphey, with a chuckle. "They watched us loading."

"Right you are," said Gentry. "Well, now, I'll not give them powder horns —save the chief, maybe—till morning. They'll be blowing themselves to Jericho. But I'll commence now with the chief."

Forthwith he summoned the savages around him, took the chief's musket, and carefully loaded it for him, pointing out each move with powder horn, shot, and rammer. He then handed the piece to the cannibal, motioned the rest back a pace or two, and showed him how to aim at a nearby palm tree which was outlined in the firelight.

Had I dared I would have laughed hysterically at the figure that cannibal cut as he aimed. He was the new chief; he dared not show his fear openly; yet he could not control the trembling of his hands nor the twitching of his features. Gentry tried to make him understand that he must hold the piece tightly against his shoulder to lessen the kick of the recoil, but evidently he did not grasp the import of it; for, when the gun roared, the butt smashed back against his shoulder, slipped, struck his jaw, and almost knocked him off his feet. Whereupon he dropped the gun, grabbed his bleeding jaw, and glared at Gentry in mixed fear and rage.

"If one man laughs," said Gentry, fiercely, "I'll throw him to the sharks." Shaking his head, then, he picked up the gun, loaded it, and had one man, standing to one side, attempt to pull the gun away from his shoulder, to illustrate how firmly he held it. Then he fired, hitting the tree; and again prepared the gun for the chief.

This time the cannibal got the hang of it; and a great cry of delight went up as he fired and struck the tree on his own account. He puffed out his chest and strutted in childish pride over his exploit; nor was he content to allow the others to practice until he had loaded and fired three more shots.

All this while not a sound had come from the ship. A good half hour went by before I heard the sound of oarlocks on the water.

At this juncture the cannibals and the buccaneers were still grouped on the north side of the large fire. They had formed a short line between the larger group and the trees, with a buccaneer as instructor for each new rifleman as they came up in turn. As all were side-on to me by now and I was well out of the firelight, I arose and slipped quietly down to the beach.

I think that in the next half minute or so, what with the racing of my heart, and the chills running up and down my spine, I must have lived a life time.

Then, when the gig came close in, and still not a sound from Barnaby, I broke out with perspiration from every pore. He had said he would be singing. It was so dark I could barely make out the gig as a blotch somewhat darker than the night itself; and I could not tell whether there was one man in it or two. Had Barnaby deserted after all, and was this another of the crew come to give Gentry warning of my presence?

But still I lingered, for at least I had the beach to run upon, and I wanted to be absolutely sure before I moved. At all events I was determined to kill Gentry before leaving, for he stood just to one side, beside the new cannibal leader, laughing and gesticulating, and now and again offering the savage his flask. He was a fair target in the firelight, and I felt that I could not miss.

The gig came to shore not far from me, but still there was no sound from the man or men aboard her. Then I heard someone arise and clamber out, and in a brace of shakes a man was walking toward the big fire. I had barely time to recognize him as Barnaby as he stepped into the outer edge of the firelight, for suddenly he raised the keg which he was carrying and hurled it straight into the fire. It had no more than struck when Barnaby threw himself flat, and the very earth rocked with a tremendous explosion.

CHAPTER XXII

BARNABY'S BOMB

NO BAND of villains was ever treated to a more terrible surprise. The terrific force of that explosion threw some of the fagots as far as our cavern, tossed one cannibal into the treetops, blew others into shreds, and set those who were not knocked down to running in all directions like so many jibbering idiots. Nor were the buccaneers in any better shape.

But Barnaby had been on his feet with the sound of the crash, and was running back to the gig, shouting, "Jack! Jack!" at the top of his lungs. In a flash he had picked up a musket and fired, following it with another, and still another; these muskets, as he told me later, were loaded with slugs and bird shot. Some of the stunned survivors were struck even before they could regain their knees; and those who had started toward the gig or the canoes turned and flew back into the trees.

By this time I was beside Barnaby. A quick shove on the gig, and we were out into the darkness and laying to the oars with a will. Only two shots followed us, and these were wide of the mark.

"Easy all, now," said Barnaby, at last, when we were near the ship. "We're safe at last—and that's an end of Cap'n Gentry, I shouldn't wonder."

"Barnaby," I cried, throwing an arm around his shoulders, "I want you to forgive me!"

"Forgive you?" said Barnaby. "And what for?"

"I'll tell you some time," I cried, squeezing his shoulders in an ecstasy. "Did you have trouble in getting the ship? And how'd you ever conceive——"

"Why, he threw one hisself once, you remember," Barnaby cut in. "It was when he said to fetch a keg of brandy I thought of it. A keg's a keg in the dark. I jist punched a wee hole in her, so the fire would hit her quick, d'y'mind. As for getting the ship— I knocked out the nigger in the cabin and tied him. The same for Jim, on deck, and it was done." Then he broke off, as a fresh hullabaloo of cries and shouts broke out on shore.

"They're getting into the canoes," said Barnaby. "Quick, lad. If they're a mind to tackle the ship, we'd best man a long nine."

Leaving the gig fast to the gangplank, we ran on deck. We had the fear upon us that the fruits of victory might be snatched from us in spite of all.

Seizing a megaphone, I ran to the ship's side and sent a hail ringing over the water toward the cavern.

"Ahoy, the cave!" I yelled. "We have the ship!"

"Is dot you, Jack?" the answering hail came back.

"Yes," I yelled. "Keep the pirates away from the canoes."

"Ve be right down," he replied, and never have I heard a more pleasant sound.

But we need not have worried. Finding the long nine loaded—for they had never fully trusted the cannibals, it appeared—we touched off one in the direction of the dark splotch below the remaining fire, and the affrighted yells we heard told us the cannibals had had more than enough. They made no attempt to get up sail, but paddled desperately—as we could tell by the sounds—until they were well clear of the ship and heading toward the mouth of the bay. We never saw them again.

Before they were out of earshot the captain and four Usagos came down the slope on the run. The savages, some twenty in number, had taken only three of the canoes, and Captain Van Tassel seized the others. Seeing this, the only remaining buccaneers left alive on shore, four in number, came up and threw down their arms, begging for God's sake to be spared.

"Very well," said the skipper. "I could use hants, or I vouldn't. Und now, vere is Chentry und dot Dumphey?"

"Dead, sir," one of the buccaneers explained. He said that the two had been blown fairly to pieces by the blast, which killed seven of the savages and wounded four more.

What a celebration we had that night you may well imagine. The Usagos and the four prisoners made litters, and we had the wounded brought aboard ship, where we were soon gathered round a punch bowl. Poor Barnaby was toasted so many times that he finally fell overboard and would have drowned but for two of the Usagos.

WELL, as it turned out, there were no more shots fired in anger on the island. Being short-handed, we were a matter of a week and more in building the dam at the falls and getting the treasure. But there it was, sure enough; not a million pounds, but over four hundred thousand all told, all safely stored, in a dry cavity dug out of the rock in the line of the north falls. The coins were packed in a dozen mahogany chests, bound round with studded brass; and had Jerry Blunt been killed before he drew his chart, they might well have remained there until Doomsday.

As for our prisoners—eight in all, counting the two wounded, and the two Barnaby had knocked out aboard ship—Uncle George decided that they were to be forgiven. There had been enough bloodshed, he said; Nero, the remaining negro, was but little better than a child in intellect, after all, and Allen, Thompson and Nutter were never buccaneers at heart. So, for their sakes, all were spared.

Once we had the treasure aboard, we stood out of Drake's Bay and away for the Usago's island. The reception we had would make another story, but it is sufficient to say that they made it so pleasant for us in their nipa shacks that we spent a full month with them, taking on stores and letting our wounded convalesce.

They gave us many golden nuggets, as they had promised, but when these were assayed they proved to be full of dross. On the other hand we took some fine pearls in trade for muskets and other articles, and later my uncle's ships made many trips to this island and others in the vicinity to trade. Meantime some ten of them, desiring to see the world, agreed to ship with us for the voyage home and soon proved to be dependable seamen.

We made an uneventful voyage home, with the faithful hands berthed aft, for once, as a mark of favor. Uncle George took Van Tassel in as a partner, and sturdy Johannsen now sails the *Anthony Wayne*, with Killifer as mate. Even Gunderson was given a berth as coxswain, while Barnaby Horn purchased a little inn on the waterfront and married a widow who keeps a firm hand on the purse strings.

Of course I was glad to be home again, but the sea is in my blood; and though I shudder sometimes at thought of the bats and the cannibals round their fire, I occasionally wish I could be treading the deck of another gallant ship and sailing over sun-kissed seas to hunt for pirates' loot on another Devil's Caldron.

TRAIL TOLL BRIDGE CHARTERS

By CLARENCE E. MULFORD

IN THE emigrant and wagon freighting days of the West ranchers were scattered along the main trails and many of them, who happened to be located near the regular fords, made considerable money by building bridges over the fords at high water. Usually the streams were insignificant, but in the spring they often became deep, swift and formidable. The territorial governments issued toll bridge charters to anyone who asked for one, and the charters neglected to put any limit on the fees to be levied, which left the matter of adjusting toll charges to the builders of the bridges. None of the rough and temporary structures were more than twenty yards long, but the tolls ran from $5.00 to $20.00 per wagon.

One of the most famous was on the trail crossing at Green River, Wyo., and was owned by a Mormon named Hickman, who charged as much for its use as he thought the traveler could part with. Some of the emigrant trains and freight outfits contained many wagons, and during the years travel was at its height the tolls collected amounted to no small sum.

SONGS of the RANGE

Edited by HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

THE origin of this song is unknown. It has been sung for years at various roundups and line camps. Old-timers like Jack Thorpe, Gene Rhodes, Charley Russell, and Ed. Borein are familiar with the song, but can only say that it still remains a maverick.

THE COWBOY'S LIFE

THE bawl of a steer
To a cowboy's ear,
Is music of sweetest strain;
And the yelping notes
Of the gray coyotes
To him are a glad refrain.

His eyes are bright
And his heart as light
As the smoke of his cigarette;
There's never a care
For his soul to bear,
No trouble to make him fret.

And his jolly song
Speeds him along
As he thinks of his little gal
With golden hair
Who is waiting there
At the bars of the home corral.

The rapid beat
Of his bronco's feet
On the sod as he speeds along,
Keeps living time
To the ringing rhyme
Of his rollicking cowboy song.

For a kingly crown
In the noisy town
His saddle he wouldn't change;
No life so free
As the life we see
'Way out on the Yaso range.

Hike it, cowboys,
For the range away
On the back of a bronc of steel,
With careless flirt
Of the rawhide quirt
And the dig of a roweled heel.

The winds may howl
And the thunder growl
Or the breezes safely moan;
A cowboy's life
Is a royal life,
His saddle his kingly throne.

THE WATERS OF BOWLEGS CREEK

By J. E. GRINSTEAD

Author of "The Scourge of the Little C", "The Master Squatter", etc.

The dry homestead on Big Bowlegs Creek looked like a hopeless proposition until Clell Berry started to investigate the source of the stream—and then it became a lively one indeed

"ALL out!" called the foreman of the grading outfit, as he stood on a little eminence overlooking the laboring teams in the long railroad cut.

Instantly, the trained mules stopped in their tracks, some with scrapers half filled, others with scrapers half dumped, and answered the welcome call with a prolonged bray. Hurriedly, the dust-covered, sweating teamsters unhitched their teams, and rushed away to the nearby construction camp. There, they washed their faces in tepid water that had been hauled from the nearest water-hole in a wooden tank, and prepared for the noonday meal of beef and beans and coffee.

It was only April, but already the sun was bearing down like August. Hot puffs of dust-laden wind came up from the great desert that lay to the south. The snow caps on distant mountains aggravated the mind, without relieving the bodily discomfort of the men who were building a railroad through the heart of Arizona, to connect two great transcontinental lines.

Clell Berry raised the water from one of the battered basins on a long bench, and dashed it over his sun-browned face and neck. Then, when he had dried his face and hands, he picked up a twisted piece of brush and beat the white dust out of the folds of his sweat-stained shirt, before going into the mess tent. By a hundred little acts, all of which Clell seemed trying to hide, he showed that he was with, but not of, the miscellaneous crowd required for frontier railroad building.

The fact was, Clell Berry was a gentleman. Not by special training for the part, not because of his lineage—though it was good enough—but naturally born a gentleman. A man who, even when he fought, and he sometimes had to fight, did it in a gentlemanly, fair, clean manner.

Clell was nearly six feet, broad of shoulder, and his sober gray eyes looked out straight from beneath heavy sandy brows. A thatch of crispy, reddish brown hair, lightened by alkali dust and the lack of a barber's attention, covered a well shaped head. The sun and dust and wind, together with a naturally good-humored disposition, had put little nests of permanent wrinkles at the corners of his eyes. Just now, there was a look of seriousness in Clell's gray eyes, as he avoided the jam and rush of men going into the tent, and waited quietly until he could enter like the gentleman he was.

The reason for the serious look was that Clell was about to undertake an adventure of which he could see only the beginning and couldn't even guess the end. He was quitting the construction company for two reasons. One was that if he stayed on the job he would have to whip Buck Spradley. That, indeed, would have been a rather pleasant task if it had been merely a matter between him and Spradley, for Buck needed a trimming. But Mr. Spradley owned three teams which he worked on the grade, hiring his own teamsters. Clell knew they'd gang on him, and he also knew he wasn't rough enough for the other men to take his part.

The main reason for his quitting, however, was that he had been working steadily on the job for more than a year; it was a dog's life to him, and he'd had enough. Besides that, he had

been thinking. People would come in with the railroad. They would have to eat. A few irrigated acres of land would be a fortune, and he was going to look for land and water that could be gotten together. He would need no engineer to tell him that water would run down-hill. He was an engineer himself. That was what he had come West for. He had found that engineers, like officers in an army, were fairly plentiful, but privates were always in demand, so he had worked in rock cuts, driven teams on grade work, and served a general apprenticeship at railroad building. Now that he had learned the trade, he was quitting to try something else.

Clell wasn't the kind of fellow that would throw down his tools and quit in the middle of the day. He was twenty-eight and thoughtful for his age. He always wanted to be fair. The eight-hour day hadn't been born at that time, so it was almost dark when, the day's work done, Clell Berry went to the foreman's tent to get his time.

As Clell entered the tent, he met a man coming out. The stranger was a tall, slender, sharp-featured man, wearing a long-tailed coat. He greeted Clell with a nod as they met and passed on. A few minutes later, when Clell came out, placing his pay check in his pocket, he saw the stranger sitting on a boulder a little way from the tent.

"I'd like to talk to you a minute, pardner," said the man and motioned to a seat on the stone by his side.

Clell had never become fully accustomed to the Western custom of being perfectly at home with strangers. He knew there were men who followed the construction camps for the purpose of gambling with the men. This man was clad very much like an itinerant gambler, but he hadn't the right expression in his face.

"Quitting the outfit?" asked the stranger, as Clell took the proffered seat.

"Yes."

"Don't blame you. It's pretty rough. Going back to civilization?"

"No. Thought I'd just stick around and help civilize this country," replied Clell.

"Oh, I see. Joining up with the Rangers, I reckon."

"Wrong again," laughed Clell. "I'm no fighting man. Fact is, I'm still a little bit afraid of the West. I'm going to look for some land that I can put water on and grow things for all these new people to eat. I have an idea——"

"And it's a good one, too!" interrupted the stranger. "I wanted to do that, but——"

The man coughed, and they sat in silence for a full minute.

"Marshall is my name—John Marshall," he then went on. "I'm up against it, hard, and I want to talk to a man that can understand things. I believe you are that kind, and I want to tell you my troubles. It won't hurt you, and maybe it'll help me."

"Go ahead," nodded Clell. "My name's Clell Berry, and I have nothing to do until morning. Then I'm going down to Badger Hole, at the end of the track, draw my pay, and look about a bit."

"WON'T be a long story," Marshall answered. "A year ago the doctors told me to get a wagon and team, come out to this dry country, and rough it. I did, and I seemed to be getting better, but I found out that a man can't keep traveling about without money. I got the same idea about farming by irrigation that you have. I found the place, too, and could have bought the claim for a song, but by that time I couldn't sing a note. I was broke, and looking for something that I could do, to eat. I came down here, thinking I might work my team a while on the grade, but it's no go. I began to cough when I got in a mile of this dust. Then I gave up, decided to sell my wagon and team for enough to take me back to the old home, where I can at least be buried like a Christian."

The man stopped and hung his head in a despondent manner.

"Did you sell your team?" asked Clell.

"No. That's what I was doing in the foreman's tent. He said the outfit wouldn't buy horses at any price, because they couldn't stand the work. If I had mules, he might buy them. The wagon, he wouldn't have."

"That's hard luck," commented Clell, in a sympathetic tone.

"Yes. I've got a good outfit. The horses are Missouri stock. Been out here a year and are acclimated. They're only six years old, and the wagon was new when I started. A fellow that runs some teams on this job, name's Spradley, offered me seventy five dollars for the two horses, if I could get rid of the wagon. I'd take it, but that wouldn't get me back to Phoenix, by stage, and buy me a ticket home, to say nothing of anything to eat."

Clell pondered the problem a minute before he spoke.

"If I had enough money, I'd buy your outfit," he said then. "I might raise enough, but there'd be none left for a grub-stake."

"It wouldn't take much to buy it," said Marshall, with a gleam of hope in his sunken eyes. "You could go up on Little Bowlegs, then, and get that claim I told you about. There's about a hundred acres that can be put under water, and there's an ocean of water in Little Bowlegs. Plenty of good pasture land adjoining it, and nobody would ever crowd in, because there's no more farm land on the creek. Just the place you're looking for. I wouldn't tell you, but I can't have it myself. Come, go down to my camp, and look at the outfit," and Marshall rose from his seat on the boulder.

Clell joined him and they walked away together. The stranger had described the very thing that Clell had been dreaming of for months. He had more than enough money to buy the outfit at a reasonable, fair price, but not enough to do that and have any operating capital left. There must be money to pay the shiftless squatter something for the claim, and to go on until a crop could be raised. True, he might grind this poor, sick, broken-hearted wanderer down, buy his team for a pittance, and get by that way. He knew that was one way men got rich in this world, but his decent character revolted at the thought.

As they walked away through the camp, a man got up from behind a great boulder, within twenty feet of where they had been sitting, and went into the foreman's tent. It was Buck Spradley.

A quarter of a mile from the construction camp, they came to Marshall's wagon and the two great, raw-boned bay horses. Clell looked the horses over the best he could in the fading light, caught the spokes of a wagon wheel and shook it to see how badly the thimbles were worn, and then sat down on the wagon tongue, and lit his pipe. A scheme was hatching in his mind, but he wanted Marshall to talk more before he decided on it.

"Hasn't the climate done you any good?" he asked, between puffs at his pipe.

"As long as I could stay up in the foothills, like the Bowlegs country, I seemed to mend, but as soon as I come down where the alkali dust is, it's all off."

"Wouldn't you like to go back up there?"

"I'd rather be there than anywhere on earth, but I can't live on climate and scenery. Buy my outfit, at your own price. Then go up there and make a fortune. I'd rather have that little irrigated farm than to have any mining proposition in the territory. I'd like to try a lot of things on it that I learned in my four years in college. Botany, horticulture, and agriculture were hobbies of mine."

Clell smoked in silence. Buying horses from strangers in Arizona at that time was a doubtful enterprise. They might be good horses, but the buyer might also be called on by a party of enraged citizens, who knew but one remedy for horse stealing and carried it with them, coiled at a saddle horn. Marshall didn't look like a thief, nor did he talk like a receiver of stolen goods; still, Clell was cautious.

"I won't buy your team," he said, at last. "I——"

"Oh, for pity sake, man!" cried Marshall, with almost a sob in his voice. "I'll take any price you say. I can't work and I don't want to starve. This West they tell about is a great place, and the people are all right. The proportion of good and bad is about the same as in other places—except in railroad camps—but the West is too busy to take care of cripples. It's a fight, out here. A real, he-man's job."

"Oh, I don't know. I've seen some cripples make a pretty good fight, in my time. Using your head in a fight cuts a good deal of ice sometimes. I'm going to make a proposition to you, by which I can't loose and you can eat. You'll know I'm all right, or I wouldn't make the offer, and I'll know you're game, if you take me up on it."

"Good enough! Let's have it."

"I'll go up to the bunk tent, get my dunnage, and put it in your wagon. Then we'll get a little sleep. About four o'clock, while it's cool, we'll head out for Badger Hole. When we get there, I'll draw my money, grubstake the outfit against your wagon and team, and we'll prospect Little Bowlegs together, share and share alike. That's fair."

"More than I ever hoped for!" cried Marshall, grasping Clell's hand. "I didn't want to be a quitter. With a partner like you, I'll stick it out and get well yet."

So were friendships made in the old West, between men driven together by hard necessity. They might, apparently, have little in common, but such friendships often lasted until death. Many a time men have stood with a dead partner at their feet, fighting on, more to avenge the death of a friend, than to protect themselves. Such became the friendship between these two men.

It was forty miles from the construction camp to the claim on Little Bowlegs, twenty-five miles from the camp to the end of the track at Badger Hole, and forty miles from Badger Hole to the Little Bowlegs country. Thus making an isosceles triangle, with a twenty-five mile base and the claim on Little Bowlegs at the apex.

THREE days later, the wagon, well stocked with supplies and grain for the team, the partners topped a rise, and Marshall, who was driving, stopped.

"Yonder," said he, "is Bowlegs Creek. There are two of them, Big Bowlegs and Little Bowlegs. Big Bowlegs is dry, except when it rains, which isn't often. Little Bowlegs has a flood of water, from head springs, all the time. You see that the two streams head almost together, curve out like a parenthesis and come together again. It looks like a bow-legged giant, lying on his back, his head in the mountains, his feet together in the edge of the plain, and a ridge of foothills between his knees. That's what the creeks took their name from. This trail crosses just below where the two creeks come together. Half a mile below that point, the water sinks into the sand and disappears. Below that, Bowlegs is a dry gorge, except when there's a waterspout, and then it's a terror."

"Looks quiet and peaceful up there," commented Clell.

"Yes. Only the one squatter in all that country, far as I know, and he's anxious to get away. There's no water between here and the crossing on Bowlegs, so we've got to make it there tonight," and Marshall urged the team on.

Peaceful! Oh, yes. Bowlegs looked peaceful enough; but one old-timer said: "Yep, you kin grow crops awful quick on this Arizony land, if you put water on it. Plumb 'stonishing, but more 'stonishinger how quick men kin raise hell on it—without no water a-tall!"

It was quite dark when, winding through the thick timber that grew along the banks of Bowlegs Creek, the partners heard the welcome music of the gurgling, rushing stream.

"Hullo!" said Marshall. "There's a camp-fire just this side of the creek. Wonder what's up now?"

They made camp at a little distance from the other and started a fire. Pretty soon the other wayfarer came over to their camp.

"Hello, Fiddler! Glad to see you!" cried the visitor, and extending his hand to Marshall.

"Why, why—how are you, Mr. Mosby?" returned Marshall, grasping his hand. "Make yourself comfortable, and we'll have some supper pretty soon. This is my partner, Mr. Berry."

Mosby acknowledged the introduction.

"Much obliged, but I done et," he said. "I'd like to hear you fiddle some after supper, though."

Marshall and Clell went on with their cooking, but Clell was wondering just a little about this acquaintance of Marshall's, in a country where there was supposed to be but one man. Marshall was doing some thinking himself. He was wondering how the owner of that coveted claim in Little Bowlegs came to be camping here below the forks, and presently he asked the question.

"Oh," said Mosby, as he squatted on his heels and smoked his old pipe, "I done sold out my claim on Little Bowlegs. Made the trade yesterday."

"To whom?" asked Marshall with a note of disappointment in his voice.

"Fellow named Spradley. Said he'd been running some teams on the new railroad. Traded me a pretty good mule, to match the one I had, and 'lowed I could get work down there."

"I'm sorry," said Marshall. "We were on our way up to give you a trade for that claim."

"Shucks! You don't want that little old place. I sting that feller Spradley good, when I traded it to him. They's on'y a hundred acres of

farm land. 'Sides that, they's a trick in it that I didn't tell you. It lays pretty, there in the bend, and looks like movin' about four shovels of dirt would put water all over it, and it would, just about."

"What's the trick, then?"

"Gravel subsoil and cracks in the rocks underneath that lets the water all out," and Mosby went on to tell the faults of a property he had sold, as men often do, but, unlike many others, he was telling the truth.

"Is there any other farm land farther up Bowlegs?" asked Clell.

"Not on Little Bowlegs. There ain't a patch of dirt that a dog could bed on, from my old place to the head of the creek—just a lot of canyons and crevices and rocks, where a yethquake or something has plumb busted things sometime."

The partners finished their cooking and fell to with hearty appetites and the silence that usually attended eating on the frontier. Mr. Mosby's jaws were not otherwise employed, so he went on talking.

"If you fellows want some real good land, you'd orto go up Big Bowlegs. There's two or three hundred acres up there. Red clay subsoil, good, deep loam, and she lays plumb pretty for water, 'cept they ain't a dang drop of water, only when it rains; then they's too much. Old Gray Hoss Riley's up there—or was, last time I seen him. He's been there five year, and raised one good crop."

Mosby rattled on until the partners finished eating. Afterward, Marshall got out his violin and blended its music with that of the gurgling stream. He was a dreamer and a rare musician. Next morning the partners were awakened by the rattle of Mosby's wagon, as he broke camp a little after daylight.

"I don't like to give this Bowlegs project up," said Marshall, after breakfast. "If Mosby told the truth, Spradley will be wanting to sell pretty soon. Suppose we take a little trip up Big Bowlegs and get the lay of the country. No use trying to trade with Spradley now."

"Might as well, now that we're here," replied Clell. "I don't want to see Buck Spradley. There's pretty apt to be trouble whenever and wherever we meet. He's a good man, I reckon, but I can't get along with him."

They hitched up the team and took the dim road that led up Big Bowlegs. Ten miles from their camp, they emerged from the boulder-strewn wilderness into a beautiful valley, walled about with foothills. The creek ran almost due south from the mountains, and the valley lay on the east side of it. As Mosby said, there was two or three hundred acres of fine land, but no water. There were two cabins in sight, and a wreath of smoke was curling from the chimney of one.

Old Gray Hoss Riley was standing in the door of the first cabin they

Riley was standing in the door

came to, and the old gray bag o' bones that gave him his name was grazing the stunted bunch grass near the cabin.

"Mawnin', gents, called the old hobgoblin, as the wagon stopped, his tobacco-stained whiskers bobbing up and down and giving the appearance of an ancient billy goat. "Prospectin', I reck'n," he went on, when they had returned his greeting.

"Thought we might locate a claim in this section, if we could find a good one," ventured Clell.

"Ain't but three claims in twenty mile that's worth the filin' fee, and they're all took. Mosby's got one on Little Bowlegs, and I got two here on Big Bowlegs. His claim ain't worth a copper-lined damn. Nothin' but water over there. Land's no account."

"How's this land of yours?"

"Best land east of the range."

"Don't seem to be much growing on it."

"Too airly yit. Git our rains mostly in May and June."

"Would you sell these claims?"

"No, sirree! Just suit me to a tee."

Marshall made a movement as if to start the team.

"Hold on, pardner! Don't hurry. I might sell that'n up there that the other cabin's on. I reck'n one's all I need. I'll take a thousand dollars for it, and——"

"And I'll give you a hundred for a quit-claim deed," said Clell.

Anybody but a pair of easy marks would have known Mr. Riley for what he was—a cold-blooded old reprobate, who would rob his grandmother's grave for a penny. He swore and protested that the offer was an insult, but within an hour he had a hundred dollars which was more than he would have given for the whole of Arizona, and the partners had a quit-claim deed, written by Marshall and duly signed, together with the original papers issued by the land office. This title wasn't much as it stood, but if they made certain payments and did certain things within a specified time, it would be perfect.

They took possession of the cabin, and Marshall began to figure. He was figuring forty bales of alfalfa to the load, and a ready market at $1.50 a bale, at the railroad. He took no account of the fact that when the railroad was built, alfalfa would be shipped in cheaper than that. In the midst of his figuring, while Clell was silently trying to figure out why he bought the claim, Old Gray Hoss hobbled up to the cabin.

"Howdy, gents. Been thinkin' about these claims. You'd orter have one apiece. I'm getting pretty old, and I'd sell out entire, if I got the right offer."

Now, Clell was putting up the money for the enterprise, and had been wondering why he had paid a hundred for a dry claim, where it never rained. Neither of the partners spoke.

"Tell you what I'll do," Mr. Riley went on. "You seem a likely pair of youngsters, that's apt to make something of this valley. I'm too old to work it. I'll sell you the other claim for another hundred."

"No," said Clell, "if it's any good one claim is enough. If it isn't any good, one claim is too much."

But Mr. Riley was no quitter, when he had set his hand to the plow. He came down to seventy-five, then to fifty, and finally offered to take a Winchester rifle and twenty-five dollars, and leave the valley. More for the riddance than for the land, Clell made the trade.

Soon after noon, Mr. Riley packed his most intimate belongings on the old gray plug and disappeared into the roughs at the south end of the valley. He had bumped two suckers, and it was not the first time he had done the like with those same two claims.

N HIS two years in the West, Clell Berry had seen very few safe deposit vaults — except the mountains, where nature had deposited her gold and silver and copper and had apparently thrown away the key. By tacit agreement, he was head of the firm, so he took all the papers in the land deal, folded them carefully, and placed them in his pocketbook. He noticed that the papers from the land office, on which the quit-claim deeds were based, had been much handled, and on one of them there was a splotch that looked like dried blood. He paid it no attention. So the papers reposed in the old leather pocketbook, which Clell always carried on his person.

Clell wasn't crazy, by any means. He was an engineer. He saw at a glance that with very little labor a dam could be built just above the upper cabin, and storm water enough stored to irrigate considerable land. As soon as Riley was out of sight, he picked up the remaining rifle, told Marshall he was going to take a look farther up the gorge, and left the cabin.

It was little more than a mile from the cabin to the head of the creek, but owing to the curve it couldn't be seen. Clell took his way up the gorge, scanning the ground with critical eye. A little way up the stream he came upon pools of water, with lush grass and weeds growing along the banks. Half a mile from the cabin the gorge became a crevasse, with towering walls of stone, and the stream a tiny ripple over the stone bed. By this time, he could see that the gorge ended, apparently, in the side of a mountain, with no way out, except the way he had come in. He went on, and came upon an immense blue pool of water under the over-hanging cliffs. A hundred feet above him, a tiny stream came over the precipice. It looked like a silver rope that unravelled as it came on, until it was a broad tassel of spray by the time it struck the pool and cast a tiny rainbow on the dark blue water. He was spellbound with the beauty of the thing. As he stood, looking in wonder, there was a great roar of water, seemingly all around him.

At last he tore himself away from the beauty spot, searched out a way, and climbed the bluff on the east side of the creek. At the top of the bluff he walked around to where the little stream broke over the cliff, then stopped and caught his breath. The roaring water was not far to seek. About a hundred feet to the west of where he stood was the head of Little Bowlegs. A flood of pure, clear water was pouring through a deep, wide crevasse in the solid stone of the mountains. The tiny stream that flowed into Big Bowlegs was simply overflow from a low place in the stone banks that ran through an age-worn channel to the cliff. From where he stood, Clell could see his own valley, and could see that it was far wider and lower than that of Little Bowlegs. At that point, the head of Little Bowlegs was a straight, stone channel for several hundred feet, as if nature had labored at it for a million years, or some Titian had chiseled an immense chute in the stone. The water was level with the top, and sweeping by with the speed of a railroad train.

Clell turned from it, and started to find the source. He had gone but a little way, when climbing on to a ledge of stone he saw for the first time, the Basin Spring. It was a hundred feet across, and boiling and bubbling like an immense pot. He crept to the edge of the spring, and gingerly put his finger in the flood. It was icy cold! The melting snow of the mountains was finding its way to the sea through crevices and grottoes.

Clell glanced up, and then started as he saw a woman standing on the other side of the basin. She was looking at him, but if she was speaking he couldn't hear her from the rumble of the water. A little way beyond the woman was a cabin. There was a climbing rose by the cabin door, and just above the house, watered by a smaller spring, was a little garden patch and some green alfalfa. Here and there were bright spots where some homely flower bloomed.

Walking around the rim, Clell crossed a brawling little stream that came from above the garden, and emptied into the basin. The woman didn't run away. She didn't seem the least frightened or embarrassed. Just surprised. She was a young woman, little more than a girl, and she was pretty. Clell said, "Good evening." The girl's teeth flashed white between red lips as she returned his greeting.

"Do—do you—" and Clell stuck.

"Yes," laughed the girl. "Strange as it may seem, I do. I live in that cabin, with my father. Won't you come and see him?"

Clell would, and he did. On the way to the cabin he told the young woman his name was Clell Berry, and she told him her name was Jenny Tatum. How else could they be introduced? There was no one else to do it. That part of the West was not very well up on conventionalities.

The house was two log rooms, with a little lean-to at one side. Flowers were growing in every nook and cranny about the place. There was some home-like, gripping thing about this solitary cabin, lost here in the mountains, that Berry couldn't explain to himself just them.

WHEN they entered the cabin, the visitor saw a long-haired, bushy-whiskered old man, sitting by a window, fingering some bits of broken quartz.

"This is my father, Mr. Tatum, Mr. Berry," introduced Jenny.

"Glad to meet you, sir," and the old man extended a gnarled and knotted hand. "Knew a Jim Berry, at Placer City. Any relation of yours?"

"Why, I haven't figured, but—er, that is, I don't know, sir!"

"Yes," said Tatum, a little later, "I been prospecting here in these mountains for twenty years or more. Everybody on the range knows Old Ranse Tatum. Most of 'em knows I got a cabin on the head of Bowlegs, but mighty few have ever seen it. How'd you find it? Prospecting?"

"No, sir," replied Clell. "I bought some claims down on Big Bowlegs."

"Claims? Claims? Why you got flimflammed. There's no mining down there."

"Claims of land," explained Clell.

"Oh, squatter's claims. Why, they ain't worth a whoop. Why didn't you take up that little pocket of land down on Little Bowlegs? Plenty of water to irrigate that. Can't raise anything in this country without water."

"I was on a trade for that, but another fellow beat me to it."

"What! Another fellow? What's his name? Know him?"

"Yes, sir, I know him. Buck Spradley is his name."

"Huh! This country is getting too thick settled for me. Don't mind having one neighbor, but if they get too thick— Don't matter on Bowlegs, though. I've prospected both branches, clean to the mouth, and never got color. Now, I struck a little pocket, over on the west prong of Hell Roar-

in' Creek, in '72 I reck'n it was, and——"

"Father, did you know the alfalfa was ready to cut again," interrupted Jenny.

"Reck'n it is. Now, there's something that'll show you what good dirt and water will do in this country, Mr. Berry. Four year ago we built this cabin here at the Basin Spring. Nothing would do Jenny but we must have a garden patch. It raises all the fruit and vegetables we want, and enough alfalfa to feed my saddle mule, Jenny's pony, and two burros. Why, back in '72, or maybe it was the next year, I struck a little pocket over on——"

"Maybe Mr. Berry would like to see the garden, father," interrupted Jenny, again.

"Yes, I expect he would," and reaching for his cane, Ranse Tatum rose and hobbled to the door.

"I limp pretty bad yet," the old fellow said, as they went toward the miniature farm, "but I'm getting better all the time. Pretty soon I will be able to make another round. I was up the range a ways last year, or maybe it was the year before, and fell and busted my leg. Minded me of the time I struck that little pocket, back in——"

"Father, tell Mr. Berry how many times we cut this alfalfa in a year."

Diverted from his "little pocket" again, Tatum told Clell about the hay, and the fruit and vegetables that Jenny grew on the little plot of ground.

"Yes, sir, it is wonderful what will grow on land in this country if you give it water, but Jenny's the farmer," he concluded. "I'm a prospector. Back in '73, or maybe it was '74, I struck a little pock——"

"There's at least another acre of good land here, Mr. Berry," said Jenny, again preventing her father from explaining about that little pocket, "but I can't get the water on it. It looks lower than the other, but the water won't run that way."

"Well, now I haven't figured, but if I had my instrument here I could fix it for you," Clell said.

"Oh, could you?"

"Yes'm. All you have to do is find out which way is down-hill, and let the water run that way. If you want, I'll bring up my instrument and figure it for you."

"I'd be so glad! That would make me quite a farm."

That was the beginning of their acquaintance. Clell stayed an hour, and at Jenny's invitation promised to come the next day and show her which way was down-hill.

Old Ranse Tatum had tried a dozen times to tell about that little pocket on the west prong of Hell Roarin' Creek, but every time Jenny would interrupt him. The facts were that old Ranse had been out on a prospecting trip three years before. Jenny had been with him. The old fellow had fallen off a bluff and had broken about everything that was breakable, knocking a dent in his head for good measure.

Throughout his fight back to life, he muttered about that little pocket on west prong. He got up again, but was crippled for life, and now he only sat by the window looking at his pieces of quartz and muttering to himself about this pocket. Perfectly rational when roused out of his reverie, but when he had talked a few moments intelligently he would slip a cog and go back to that pocket.

Clell looked again at the mammoth spring and speculated on how much, or rather how little, labor would be required to turn a sufficient amount of that great volume of water into his valley, to irrigate all the farm land he and his partner had. It was the heart of a primitive wilderness. Doubtless this was the first time a trained eye ever had studied the possibilities of the spring as an irrigation project.

Reaching the bed of the gorge by a perilous climb, Clell gave one hurried glance at the beautiful silver rope, which he meant to enlarge until he could climb by it to fortune, and, subconsciously he was thinking of a wonderful woman.

"Clell Berry," he muttered to himself, "you're just about the luckiest man in the world. Lucky in coming to Arizona, in the first place; lucky in meeting up with John Marshall; lucky that Buck Spradley beat you to the claim on Little Bowlegs; lucky that you bought out both of Riley's claims, and—just luck every way, that's all," and he whistled a merry tune as he hurried on down the gorge.

IT WAS almost sunset when he got in sight of the cabin. He could see only one of the horses and Marshall was not in sight. He sensed something wrong and quickened his pace. He found his partner bound and gagged, on the dirt floor of the cabin. There was a frightful lump on his head, where he had been struck a heavy blow, and he was groaning with pain.

"Who did this!" demanded Clell.

"I don't know," replied Marshall weakly. "After you left, I lay down to take a little nap. When I woke, or rather when I came to, I was bound and gagged and my head was bursting."

Clell forgot the wonderful story of luck that he was going to tell his partner. The first thought that came to his mind, as he removed the gag and unbound Marshall's hands even before Marshall had spoken, was that Buck Spradley was at the bottom of this outrage. Clell, like most good-natured, fair-minded men, was a terror when he was mad, and he was good and mad now. There was plenty of room in that country for the few people in it, without crowding, and he didn't mean to be crowded. Buck Spradley had found out, in some way, and had come into the Bowlegs country to beat him out of a claim. He had succeeded and ought to be satisfied.

As soon as Marshall was a little better, Clell dug into a pack and got out an old Colt's .45. He buckled it on, grimly.

"Seems like you have to fight for what you get in this country, same as anywhere else," he said. "I didn't want to fight, but if nothing else will do, I'm in."

Marshall tottered over to a battered old grip, and hauled out an old hog-leg. He buckled it on, dragged it from the holster, and spun the cylinder awkwardly. It was a piece of comedy to watch him, and Clell laughed outright.

"Oh, I know it's a joke, Clell, but—but—I'll do my best to shoot the next fellow that—oh, hell! I'm not fit for the frontier. Let's hitch up and get out of here."

"Hitch up what? Didn't you know one of the horses was gone?"

"No."

"Well, it's true, and I've been wondering why they didn't take both. Looks like——"

"I know why. Nobody on earth but me can catch Old Seelum, when he's turned loose. I turned them loose to graze."

"Well, here we are. I might put the saddle on Seelum, and try to track the thief down, but it would be foolish. I don't know the country. The thief

has got four or five hours start. Guess we'll have to let him go—for the present."

Clell knew Buck Spradley was a bully and a gambler, but never thought of him before as an out-and-out thief. The thoroughness with which the marauder had gone through their effects, after putting Marshall out, didn't escape Clell. There was evidence, also, that Marshall's pockets had been gone through, but not a thing was missing. This puzzled Clell, but he made no mention of it to his partner, who, apparently, had troubles enough for the time.

They ate supper, tied Seelum to the wagon, right at the cabin door, where they could watch him, then sat smoking in silence. Finally, Marshall broke out railing at himself for getting them into a mess.

"Oh, cut that out!" growled Clell. "I'm the one that caused it all, by making an enemy of Buck Spradley, but I never did know how he came to hate me so. Don't blame yourself. You're hurt worse than I am. You've lost a horse and got a cracked head. I've only lost a couple of hundred dollars—and that ain't lost yet, I don't think."

The last words Clell spoke, as they went to bed, were: "I'm going to sleep with one eye open, and if anybody fools around this cabin before morning, I'll do my best to keep him with us."

It was past midnight, and the waning moon had risen, when they both woke and sprang up to listen. The pounding hoofs of a running horse came thundering up the valley. They drew their guns and stood tensely waiting. Grim determination was on their faces. Neither of them had ever been in a gun-fight, but they were willing to try. The lone horse galloped into view, a length of frayed rope flying at its neck. It was Seelum's mate, come home.

"Good!" cried Clell. "Now we are whole again, except your cracked head."

"And that'll heal," said Marshall, as he secured a rope and tied up the returning horse. "I won't go to sleep at the switch again."

"Marshall," said Clell, next morning after breakfast, "there's no use trying to fool ourselves about this thing. We're up against trouble. Somebody—I don't know who it is—don't want us to have these claims. If you say the word, we'll pull up and leave."

"If *I* say the word! Do you want to quit?"

"Not any. I never wanted to do anything as much in my life as I want to stick on and fight this thing out."

"Talk sense, then," said Marshall. "I wouldn't live more than fifteen minutes anywhere else, and I'd get more pleasure out of taking one shot at the gent that cracked me over the head than I could ever get in any other way. Let's take the balance of our stuff out of the wagon and go to housekeeping right."

That afternoon, Clell fished his transit out of his kit of surveyor's instruments and told Marshall he wanted to go up the gorge again and take some levels.

"Go ahead," coughed Marshall. "I haven't got wind enough to go with you, but I've got good eyes and I won't be caught asleep again."

After finding Marshall bound and gagged, Clell didn't mention his discovery at the head of the gorge. He'd take some levels and make sure that he could do the things that looked so easy before he told his partner about it.

BACK at the Tatum cottage, Clell set up his instrument, ostensibly to do a bit of engineering for Jenny Tatum. He could have handled her problem by simply looking at the ground. An hour's work with the pick and shovel, and he had water on the little plat of ground. Incidentally, he had found out something he wanted to know about the stone that lay between the basin spring and the bluff where his silver rope hung over.

"I don't know how I can ever repay you for putting the water on the balance of my little farm," said Jenny Tatum, as he was about to take his leave.

"I'll take part of the vegetables that grow on it," grinned Clell.

"Oh, shame on me! Why didn't I think to offer you some vegetables. There are plenty here. Take what you like."

"Not this time," he said. "This old transit is load enough. There's something that I would like to have, though."

"And that is?"

"Permission to turn some of the water from the basin spring into Big Bowlegs, so I can irrigate my land."

"Turn it all in there, if you want to. It's below my farm. Can you do it?"

"I don't know, ma'am. I'll be back in a week or two, and I can tell you then."

Jenny Tatum, the prospector's daughter, watched Clell's broad shoulders until they went out of sight over the bluff. There was an odd light in her brown eyes. She was wondering if he really could turn that flood of water onto his land. Certainly he could, she told herself. A man like that could do anything. There was another thought, still back of that in her mind, as she turned to where old Ranse was mumbling over his bits of quartz at the cabin door.

Clell found Marshall undisturbed. On his former return from the Tatum cabin, his story had been held back by the condition in which he had found his partner. Now there was another cause—just pure jealousy. He would not have admitted it—didn't even know it, in fact—but, subconsciously, he was telling himself that he had found this wonderful woman and didn't want her to meet the polished, affable John Marshall, with his music, until— That was as far as his mind went. It refused to set a date for the meeting.

Only once had he been a bit suspicious of this partner whom he had picked up in a moment at the construction camp. That was when they met Mosby and he found that the two men were acquainted.

"We've got to go down to the nearest land office in the morning," announced Clell, as they sat smoking after supper. "I want to be sure of our title to these claims."

"Think they're worth the trouble, with no water on them?" asked Marshall.

"Yes. I think we can put water on them, with a little work, but I don't

want to do the work for someone else."

The following morning, they loaded their effects into the wagon, and left at daylight. Clell made the mental note that it looked as if they were abandoning their claims and wondered what Spradley's next move would be.

It was fifty miles to the nearest land office. Arrived there, it was discovered that the documents were all regular. The payment of nominal fees for the recording of the papers and going through certain forms perfected the title to the two claims, one in the name of Clell Berry and the other in the name of John Marshall.

"Now let Spradley crack his whip," said Clell, as they left the land office. "That land is ours, 'To have and to hold, etc.' "

"I'm afraid I've let you in for a lot of trouble," said Marshall, in a doubtful tone.

"Trouble! You've let me in for a fortune and the only life worth living."

"You are an enthusiastic farmer," smiled Marshall. He didn't know that there was more than the promise of green fields, back there on Bowlegs, to Clell Berry.

ABOUT noon, on the fourth day, their wagon, now heavily laden, and containing, among other things, some bags of alfalfa and other seeds, rattled into the Valley on Big Bowlegs. Clell had feared Spradley would burn the cabins in their absence. The valley was just as it had been when they first entered it. Even Old Gray Hoss Riley was standing in the door of the first cabin, and the old gray bag o' bones was cropping the dry bunch grass.

"Mawnin', gents," greeted Gray Hoss. "I been on a little prospectin' trip over east a ways. I draps in here last night about dark, to see how you fellows makes out in yo' new home. Don't see nobody around, so I stays all night in the cabin. Where y'all been?"

"Down to the railroad to get some bacon and flour," replied Clell.

No effort was made by either of the partners to detain Mr. Riley, and he soon left, going down Big Bowlegs, just as he had done on that first day when they had brought him out.

"Wonder what that old devil is hanging around here for," growled Clell, when Riley was out of hearing.

"Oh, he's just a shiftless old prospector," replied Marshall. "The mountains are full of them. They're no good to themselves or anyone else. The hundred and twenty-five you paid him has made him rich. He'll go on hunting a fortune, now, until his money is gone. Then he'll freeze to death in a blizzard or starve in the desert. Most of them are half crazy."

Clell thought of Old Ranse Tatum, but didn't mention him.

"Well, Mr. Riley is one prospector that I can get along without," he said, instead. "I've got a hunch that he's acquainted with Buck Spradley. Our title to these claims is good, and I mean to stay here. If he comes snooping around here again, I'm going to find out why."

A little way above the upper cabin, which the partners had selected as their home, a natural dam lay across the creek. It looked as if, at some time, Nature had hurled down part of a mountain, and the seamed stone had landed across the gorge. Their water supply came from what was supposed to be a spring, at the upper end of the long pool formed by the dam. That is, at the upper end of what would have been a deep pool, a quarter of a mile long, had there been any water in it. The partners drove the wagon around the end of the dam and on toward the spring which Clell knew was nothing but the water from his silver rope, and which trickled down the gorge under the gravel that covered the solid stone floor.

"Must have been ten years since it rained in this country," commented Marshall, "or there'd be water in that place."

"Fissure in it," replied Clell. "That's what these ten bags of cement are for. Nature has done just about everything for us, up here. All we have to do is put on the finishing touches, and we'll have a paradise."

On high ground, near the spring, a good part of their load was unloaded, beneath some bushes, and covered up.

"I feel better," said Clell, as the wagon rattled back down to the cabin. "I know what dynamite will do, and I don't enjoy riding on a load of it."

Back at the cabin they unloaded a plow, hoes, shovels, bags of seeds, and miscellaneous supplies.

"Now we're all set!" cried Clell, as he wiped the sweat from his face. "Can you plow, Marshall?"

"I think so. I never plowed much, but I have a general working knowledge of the business," and Marshall smiled in his whiskers.

"I don't mean to be bossy," said Clell, "but the job of stopping the fissure in the dam and turning water from that spring I found is too hard for you. If you'll keep house and plow a little on both claims, just to show our good faith as homesteaders, I'll work at the water problem."

"Fine! You're the boss, Clell. If it hadn't been for you, I'd either have starved to death or else I'd be back at the old home, broke, coughing away the little time left me, with everybody pitying me and at the same time wishing I was out of the way. I'd rather be dead. Yes, I'll plow what I can. You go right ahead and boss the job."

Two weeks passed. Clell was off by daylight, every morning, and returned at dark. Marshall saw the white, limy drill dust on Clell's overalls, and knew he was preparing to blast some stone, but he asked no questions. He, too, was busy. He had plowed a considerable patch of land on the upper claim, and enough on the lower one to show good intentions.

Every day, these two weeks, Clell had eaten a good dinner of fresh vegetables, wholesome bread and meat and coffee, at the Tatum cabin, while Old Ranse's dog spurned the lunch he invariably carried. He felt ashamed of not telling Marshall what was at the head of the gorge, but he just couldn't do it. He was willing to work for his sick partner, and to divide everything else with him, but Jenny Tatum was a different matter.

Every day Jenny Tatum watched from the cabin door as Clell drove the long churn drill into the soft stone barrier that lay between him and a fortune, and he began to hope. True, she knew nothing about him, but conventions must be dispensed with on the frontier. He knew nothing about her, except that her father was a half-mad old prospector, but that made no difference to him. There was no other woman on earth like Jenny, to him, and never could be.

She had come out to where he was at work, late that afternoon, as she often did, and stood watching him draw the long drill and clean the drillings from the hole with the narrow iron spoon.

"That's the last hole," said Clell, as he looked up at her. "Pretty soon

I'll shoot them, and then I'll have water on my land."

"And pretty soon after that you'll be busy on your farm and forget where the water comes from," she said, and there was a wistful note in her voice.

"Not in a thousand years!" and Clell's voice trembled. "I've got everything ready to turn the water into Big Bowlegs, but unless—" and he stopped.

"Unless, what?" murmured Jenny.

"Unless I can have you, I don't want any water, don't want any farm. I'll go back to rambling."

He looked into her eyes, and the next instant she was in his arms. The only other work Clell did that day was to take a sledge and cold chisel and break away the stone at the low rim of the basin. This let out enough water to enlarge his silver rope about a hundred times. As he went down the gorge, water was gurgling over the stones, and he knew there would be plenty in the great pool by morning, with which to mix his cement and close the fissure. Then he would be ready to turn the stream into his enchanted valley. Then would come wealth, and—Jenny.

He said nothing of all this to Marshall, but he couldn't help showing his happiness in his beaming countenance. Marshall saw it and attributed it to the buoyant health which his partner had and which he himself could never regain. Marshall had a "fiddling fit" on him that night. He rarely played, except when he was low-spirited. He hadn't plowed any that day. The fact, was, he had had a slight hemorrhage but had said nothing about it.

On into the night the violin poured out its melody, but it was mostly sad, classical compositions. Clell sat in the cabin door, listened and wondered. The sad music had driven the gay mood from his heart. He thought of Buck Spradley, of Old Gray Hoss Riley, of Mosby and his apparent intimacy with Marshall. Someone wanted him out of the valley. Who could it be, except Spradley? Why had he kept quiet the last two weeks? He wasn't the kind to give up without a fight. Ugly thoughts marched through Clell's mind, like platoons of enemy soldiers. When at last they went to bed, sleep didn't come quickly as usual, and he was restless when he did finally sleep.

Clell woke with a start and sat up on his pallet. The moon was shining brightly and Marshall's pallet was vacant. Clell called to him, and he answered from just outside the door. A moment later, he came in.

"I've got a blue spell tonight, Clell," he said. "Been sitting out there on the old wagon tongue, looking at the moon, as I have so often done since I've been in this country. It looks as if one could almost reach the moon and stars. Do you believe in premonitions?"

"No," laughed Clell. "Guess my liver's too active for that," and he stretched out on his pallet.

The two horses had been driven up the gorge, above the spring, and left to graze on the greener grass and weeds they found there. There was a dead stillness over the place, and Clell fell asleep again. It seemed to him that he had slept but a moment when Marshall shook him by the arm.

"Wake up, Clell," he whispered. "Listen!"

IN THE great stillness, they could hear the hoofs of several horses coming up the valley.

"They're coming to drive us out, this time," said Marshall, calmly.

"And we won't drive worth a damn!" snapped Clell, as he drew on his trousers and boots, buckled on his pistol, and sprang for his rifle that stood in the corner. "Will you stay with me, if it comes to a fight, Marshall?"

"I'll stay as long as I last, Clell, but I'm afraid I won't be much help. I never was in a gun-fight, and——"

"Hello, in there!" called a voice from the outside.

"Hello, yourself," returned Clell. "What do you want?"

"Come out here."

"Can't right now. I'm busy. State your business; I can hear you."

"All right. We come to notify you nesters to get out of this valley. This is a cow country, and we don't aim to have any farmers in it."

"Oh, you won't have any farms?" Clell answered. "Well, now you listen to me. There's one little farm on Bowlegs that's going to stay right here. We have a title to the land, from the Government, and if you don't get away from here and stay away, somebody'll get hurt."

The reply was a volley of shots. Peering out through a crack, Clell had seen six mounted men. One of them was Old Gray Hoss Riley. The others were strangers. Buck Spradley wasn't with them. As the bullets spattered the cabin wall, one or two coming through cracks, Clell's rifle spat a streak of flame, and Riley slid from his old gray bag o' bones.

"Get down and rush 'em, fellers!" called the man who had been the spokesman and seemed to be the leader. "They're just a coupla damned tenderfoots."

At the word, Clell and Marshall both began working their guns. Clell was mad, now, and beside himself with rage.

"Come on in, damn you!" he called out, in a lull of the firing, as he shoved fresh cartridges through the loading-gate of his Winchester. "My feet may be tender, but my hands are hard from honest work. I can't shoot much, but I can hit like hell!"

The gang dismounted and bunched for a rush. Two streams of fire from the cabin wall poured into them. Two more of the six went down. The other three fled toward their horses.

Through his lookout, Clell saw four more men gallop up to the fray.

"Reinforcements! Now we will have it!" he growled.

Marshall, leaning against the wall, coughed slightly but said nothing. He had said he would stay as long as he lasted, and he was staying. Clell had no time to look at his partner. A funny thing was happening out there in the moonlight. The four newcomers had covered the three survivors of the battle, and coolly handcuffed them.

"Hello, within there!" called one.

"All right," replied Clell. "What's on *your* mind? Want a little of the same?"

"Not any, thank you!" laughed the man. "We're state Rangers and tried to catch this gang before they got here. Let's suspend hostilities, and see what you have done to them."

At that instant, Clell heard a choking noise from Marshall's corner of the cabin, and turned just in time to see his partner turn loose the wall to which he had been holding and slump to the floor.

Clell lit the old battered lantern, and the captain of the Ranger squad came in.

"One dead, and two hurt bad enough to hold 'em for a while, on the outside. What's the casualty list in here?"

"My partner's hit," faltered Clell, looking up from where he knelt by

the side of Marshall, who was covered with blood.

The ranger went over the still form that lay on the floor.

"Yes, your partner's hit, pretty hard," A moment later he said. "He's dead. I guess that bullet caused his death, but the blood didn't come from his wound." Then, lowering his voice, "He was a lunger, wasn't he?"

Clell nodded.

"I thought so," continued the ranger. "It's murder, just the same, and will be the finish of this gang. We've been trying to catch them with the goods for a year. It is a regular organized business. They have filed on claims like this all along the foothills. A tenderfoot comes along; some member steers him to one of the claims, telling him it can be bought for a song. He buys it, and then the gang runs him off.

By this time, they had walked to the door. In spite of the battle and of Marshall's death, Clell was thinking of another matter.

"What about that claim on Little Bowlegs?" he asked.

"That," replied the Ranger captain, "was another one they used. The land is worthless, but there's plenty of water, and the green settler grabbed it. Fellow by the name of Mosby worked it. They hadn't bumped a sucker for months, and we thought they'd quit. Then a few days ago a man named Spradley came to us with a tale about trading for Mosby's claim and afterward being run ragged until he left it. Then we heard somebody was plowing the claims on Big Bowlegs, and hurried up here.

Clell said nothing. He was pretty sure Spradley knew all about the claim on Little Bowlegs, and had intended to bump him with it, but had been caught in his own net.

Come morning, and the Rangers helped Clell bury his late partner on a bit of rising ground at the edge of the valley.

"Now, Mr. Berry," said the Ranger captain, "we'll pay you to take your wagon and haul this quiet gent, who was wanted dead or alive, Gray Hoss and the other cripple, and the three sound ones, down to headquarters."

"You can take the team and bring it back," said Clell. "I don't want to leave here just now."

"Don't blame you much. We'll send the team back, and also a split out of the reward money."

"Just send the team. Don't think I could use any money I got that way," said Clell,

IT WAS midafternoon. John Marshall's old brown violin lay silent in its case. Clell had looked through the dead man's meager effects. There was nothing but some odds and ends of clothing and a book or two. Nothing to identify him. No former address. From a little bunch of keys found in Marshall's pocket, he fitted one to a leather-bound, trunk-shaped valise and opened it. Here, Clell expected to find papers that would tell whom to notify of his partner's death. What he did find was a single sheet of paper. The last will and testament of John Marshall, dated the day before and written in ink, in a clear hand and scholarly language. It left his wagon and team, his interest in the claims, and all his earthly effects to McClellan Berry.

Clell folded it reverently and placed it in his pocketbook for safe keeping. Whoever and whatever Marshall may have been, there was no evidence now. A little heap of paper ashes in the fireplace, evidently made the day before, and unnoticed by Clell until now, bore mute testimony of the man's thoroughness. Clell was thinking, sadly, that they had buried him almost before he was cold, when a shadow fell in the cabin door. He started violently, and turned to see the tear-stained face of Jenny Tatum!

"Wha—what's the matter?" stammered Clell.

"Fa—father's d-dead!" Jenny sobbed, as she sank to a proffered camp stool.

Then she sobbed out her story. Old Ranse had spells in which he fell and became unconscious. A doctor had told her once it was caused by clots on the brain and that some time it would kill him. That morning he had fallen, and in spite of all her efforts the old prospector's spirit had gone to investigate the "little pocket" in another land.

When she had rested a while, Clell took up his pick and shovel and silently led the way up the gorge. There was nothing to say. At least, his tongue was not schooled to say the things that might be said, so he used the true language of sympathy—silence.

In a little cove, above the garden, under a juniper tree, Clell made a grave. Then he took up, tenderly, the emaciated body of the broken old prospector, and laid it to its last long sleep. When the last shovelful of earth had been replaced, they returned to the cabin, and sat in the doorway as the sun sank in the west.

Jenny told him she had no one to go to, no relatives, no friends. Her mother, who had died when she was twelve, had taught her many things; among others, to be a true woman. After her mother's death, she had gone from place to place with her father. The last four years, they had lived in this cabin, spending sparingly of the proceeds of the "little pocket," of which Ranse was always talking. It was about gone now. Their last trip to the little mining town, thirty miles over the range, had almost cleaned it up.

"I don't want you to go to anybody else, Jenny," faltered Clell, but——"

"I know, Clell. You're thinking about a preacher, and everything regular, like that. I been thinking about that, too. We can make a trip down to the settlement and get married regular, so people won't talk."

"Another thing, Jenny. When I drilled the holes for those blasts, I didn't think about anything but getting water into Big Bowlegs. If I ever fire them, there won't be a splinter left of your cabin——"

"That's all right, Clell. I won't need it any more. I'm going with you. Wait until I put a few things in a bag. We'll get the rest before you fire the blasts."

Together they went back down the gorge in the purple dusk.

The team came back and a week later the fissure in the dam was closed. A mighty thunder of blasts shook the mountains, and the waters of Bowlegs Creek changed their course. Little Bowlegs was a dry gorge after that, and Mosby's worthless claim became a barren spot of mountain.

Old records of Yavapai County, running back to early territorial days, carry the information that McClellan Berry and Jenny Tatum were duly married on a certain date, approximately that of the great blast. Down where Bowlegs once sank into the sand, there is now a great reservoir, and many hundreds of acres of fruit and alfalfa, but Clell's old claim on Big Bowlegs was the pioneer, and still yields its crop of green gold.

AUSTRALIA—FORTUNE LAND

By Roderick O'Hargan

Author of "The Forty-Niners", "The Comstock Lode", etc.

Though the Government officials hushed up the discovery, fearing that it might lead to an "utter disorganization of society," gold will out—and when it came out Australia experienced a stampede of the wildest sort, with nuggets of wondrous size and fortunes picked up over night.

THERE was a celebration at the Stag's Head saloon, Downieville, Sierra County, California. A dozen or more gold-seekers from the nearby bars on the Yuba River were on hand to say good-by to "Sailor" Hargraves. The great California gold rush of 1849 was approaching its crest. "The City", as San Francisco was known throughout the diggings, was overflowing with wealth. Crowds of red-shirted miners from the creeks, anxious to exchange their dust for something—anything—anything that caught their eye—met and mingled with the vast horde of adventurers drawn from all parts of the world. From the over-taxed saloons came the droning cry, "Money on the bar," indicating a lucky man inviting the world to celebrate with him.

Even Downieville, born only a few months before, was bubbling with excitement. The guest of the evening, Edward Hargraves, was returning to Australia with the avowed intention of discovering a goldfield even greater than that of California. Like many others, he had come hotfoot to the California diggings one year before. He had not been successful as a miner, this soldier, sailor and bushman. Perhaps he was more of a talker than a worker. He certainly had a flair for the theatrical and was given to boasting of Australia.

Half a century before this little farewell celebration took place, England's political heads were puzzling over what to do with a huge island in the Southern Seas. A penal colony! Good idea! So for fifty years she had dumped her convicts there—some cut-throats of the lowest type, others misguided idealists who had queer political views. As a result about one-half of the population of Australia were either convicts or "emancipists"—the latter, convicts who had served their terms but were not permitted to return to the motherland.

"Even if you did discover a goldfield in Australia, Hargraves, that old queen of yours wouldn't let you have the gold," an emancipist from Australia sneered, while Hargraves boasted.

"Queen Victoria, God bless her, will be informed that I have discovered a great goldfield and will make me one of her Gold Commissioners and perhaps afterward a peer of the realm," Hargraves replied, striking an attitude.

Curiously enough a large part of this childish boast was destined to come true!

Arrived in Sydney, New South Wales, Hargraves tried to induce old friends and acquaintances to put up funds for him to make an expedition into the "back-blocks" to discover a goldfield. He pointed out that he had just come from California and was an expert at both discovering and washing gold. His friends refused to put their money into such a wild speculation. Nothing daunted, he invested the few dollars that represented all his capital in a saddle horse. He then rode across the Blue Mountains, through Bathurst, to Guyong, where he picked up a native guide and plunged into the wilderness.

About fifteen miles from the settlement, at a point on Lewis Pond's Creek, a tributary of the McQuarie River, the two men prepared their first meal. Having eaten, Hargraves, probably regretting that he had no larger audience, informed the native of the object of their expedition. The eyes of the "blackfellow" bulged with excitement. This slight encouragement was sufficient to cause Hargraves to get to his feet. "Right where we are now resting is a goldfield," he announced. "It is all about us. I will prove it to you."

He took a dishpan and washed a pan of dirt. It showed a few grains of gold! In all he washed five pans in rapid succession and four of them showed colors. Later he admitted that his talk had been bluff; he had only hoped that gold was there!

A few weeks later, Hargraves walked into the office of the Honorable Deas-Thompson, Colonial Secretary, at Sydney, and opened a mysterious paper package. The official was in a cheerful frame of mind. He listened to his visitor with patience and good humor.

"By Jove, my man, it is gold!" he finally exclaimed, adjusting his eye-

glasses. "I believe your story. I will have it investigated."

HARGRAVES' dramatic discovery was not the first time gold had been talked of in Australia. Nearly thirty years before, one of the convicts at Botany Bay showed a specimen of gold-splashed quartz he claimed he had found. When asked to show the place of discovery, he was unable to find it again and was awarded one hundred and fifty lashes for his "deception". A few years later a gang of convicts building a road through the Blue Mountains found a number of gold specimens, but the news was promptly suppressed because it was feared that the convicts would get out of hand.

In 1841, ten years before Hargraves returned from California, a bushman named Adam Forres found a good size nugget and showed it to W. B. Clarke, a geologist. Clarke took it to Governor Gipps, who dismissed the matter by saying, "Put it away, Mr. Clarke, put it away, or we shall all have our throats cut." Clarke thereupon advised his friends, who were excited about the find, that he would not make it public as he feared it might lead to the "utter disorganization of society".

The investigation of Hargraves' discovery promised by Secretary Deas-Thompson took place. Again the official mind was stubborn!

"I can see no evidence whatever of the precious metal in the district indicated," Mr. Stutchburg, the Government geologist, reported.

But Hargraves was so earnest and so insistent that the geologist made a second visit and watched Hargraves wash out a dozen pans of dirt, several of which showed a string of colors. Moreover, half a dozen men who had caught the trick from "the forty-niner" were panning on the creek and showing colors in pan after pan. The geologist was forced to admit the gold was there. The news was reported in the press. The stampede was on! What a Government geologist said or thought did not matter now; he was brushed aside like a chip in the wind. Within a few days four hundred amateur miners were milling around the spot where Hargraves had washed his historic pan of dirt.

Before Hargraves' find was fully accepted, two new fields were discovered, one on the Turon River and another on the Abercrombie, and these were followed almost immediately by the "Kerr strike". At a little sheep station on the banks of the Merro River, a "blackboy" horsebreaker, idly chipping at a quartz boulder, struck harder than he had intended and split the rock, revealing to his astonished gaze a core of solid gold bigger than his fist. Two other similar boulders were promptly broken up, bringing to light even larger chunks of solid gold. One of these, had it remained unbroken, probably would have been the biggest sample of native gold in the world.

The news ran through Australia like wildfire. Within a few weeks from almost every point of the compass reports of new discoveries were coming in, one on the heels of the other. There were:

Clunes	on July 8th
Buninyong	on August 8th
Anderson's Creek	on August 11th
Balarat	on September 8th
Mount Alexander	on September 10th
Broken River	on September 29th

Four of these discoveries became great producers. Mount Alexander, for instance, produced more than ten thousand ounces of gold in the first fifteen days of existence. Any man with a spade and tin dish could be a successful miner. Indeed, few knew anything of mining, shown by the fact that many claims were abandoned and re-abandoned only to yield fortunes to second and third comers. One such abandoned claim, the "Poor Boy" at Eureka, yielded a nugget of pure gold weighing over six hundred ounces. In another instance, a pillar of earth, left as a support in a deserted claim at Bendigo, calved a nugget weighing more than five hundred ounces.

The effect of these discoveries was two-fold; to the officials, it was a calamity; to the masses, it was a windfall. The officials saw in it only a possible uprising of the convicts and demoralization of the laboring classes. The Commissioner of Lands at Bathurst, hearing of Hargraves' activities, sent a special message to the governor advising "that steps be taken to prevent the working classes from deserting their regular employment for the goldfields". Gold, to the masses, spelled quick fortunes and trade revival.

Australia had been passing through a period of great commercial depression. People were drifting away, especially to California. The gold strike was a lifesaver. First timidly, then boldly, committees of wealthy citizens offered cash rewards for gold discoveries. Men, women and children gave part or all of their time to the search, often looking in the most unlikely places, yet sometimes not without results. A stagecoach driver in his spare time found the Ding-Dong deposits and realized a fortune.

IT WAS as if some electric shock ran through every town, village and household in Australia. Almost the entire male population poured along the roads that led to the goldfields. Men forsook their ordinary vocations. The shearer left the sheep station; the driver his team; lawyers and even judges forsook their courts; the merchant his counting-house, and the clerks their desks. Geelong, Melbourne and Sydney became almost empty towns. In Hobson's Bay on January 6th, 1852, there lay forty-seven merchant ships abandoned by their crews, who had set out for the goldfields to wash a fortune out of a tin dish. The police resigned in scores; even warders in lunatic asylums left their patients. Business reached a standstill. Schools were closed. In some places not a man was left.

At Melbourne, out of forty-four constables, only two remained on duty. The governor issued a circular to department heads in Sydney, asking how they were affected by the gold "disturbance." The police chief reported, "Although a great increase of pay has been offered, fifty of my fifty-five constables have gone to the goldfields." The postmaster, "An entire disruption has taken place in this department and immediate measures must be taken." The harbor master reported, "I have only one man left."

Society was cast into the melting pot; all disappeared over the rim of the horizon in a breathless race to where they had been told gold nuggets were being dug up like potatoes. Thus had the whisper of gold risen to a shout of gold, and it ran round the world and turned the stems of ships on every sea toward Australia. It was the day of the clipper ships of New England, and their skippers went after this new trade with Yankee keenness.

During this time passenger traffic between Australia and San Francisco was greater than it has ever been since —Australians stampeding to Cali-

fornia and Californians rushing to Australia. In five months eleven thousand immigrants passed through the principal Australian ports. In the next four years over four hundred thousand immigrants arrived, almost all drawn there by the lure of gold.

After the first rush to the diggings had subsided the cities began to fill up again. Supplies for the new mining camps became a commercial factor, and this, together with the handling of the horde of overseas stampeders, caused a big expansion in business. Then when the miners began to take their vacations from the diggings, these Australian cities, formerly quiet sheep towns, experienced their first period of rushing business and wild extravagance.

The lucky diggers became the outstanding figures of local society. Their wagerings at the race track or gaming table put former plungers into the shade. They imported the world's best race-horses, the world's largest diamonds, and built fine homes. Until that time the wealthy in Australia were almost exclusively the "official" class, aristocrats from England, but with the coming of gold men rose from poverty to wealth almost overnight and the old social lines were thrust aside. The forceful and hard-fisted bosses of the mining camps became the leaders and dominators of commerce, finance and society.

As in American get-rich-quick communities, a plague of human parasites began to infest these easy-money centers. Bands of bushrangers sprang into existence and prayed upon the traffic between the goldfields and the cities, but the authorities, if slow, were sure. They stamped out crime with a deadly thoroughness that cowed the rough element. Hold-up—"robbery under arms" it was called—was a crime punishable by death. Australia's period of lawlessness, in many ways romantic and interesting, was of short duration. The citizens formed no Vigilance Committees. Putting down crime was left to the Mounted Police, and they made a good job of it.

THE returns in the first few months after gold was discovered made a dazzling record. The first dolly set rocking at Golden Point yielded four and one-half pounds of gold in two hours. At Canadian Valley, in the same district, the wash and rubble yielded an average of about thirty-five pounds weight of gold per claim. At Blacksmith's Hole, on the Canadian River, one party of mates in one day obtained over fifteen hundred dollars per man, the average of the claim being one ounce of gold to every bucket of earth. This claim was worked twice after being abandoned and in all yielded more than one ton in weight of the precious metal.

From one fraction, only twelve feet by twelve feet, at Gravel Bend, one hundred and twenty-five pounds weight of gold was taken out in less than thirty days. Another syndicate of eight men, working nearby, pocketed one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. The Prince claim was leased for one week and yielded about eighty thousand dollars; then, for a two-week period, yielding forty-five thousand dollars. Before the end of the year 1851 over thirty thousand miners were working in the Victoria goldfields. In the following year this province alone yielded gold to the value of forty-eight million dollars, and in the succeeding year one hundred and five million dollars, and this golden flood spelled prosperity to the whole of Australia.

Australia too, startled the imagination of the world by the large size of the chunks of gold occasionally found. For several years the industry of mining was mostly a matter of luck. It was a tenderfoot's paradise. Barbers had equal chance with geologists, and jockeys with experienced miners. There is no other example in the history of mining such a succession of great nuggets. One expert has made a calculation of the world's famous nuggets, one hundred and fifty in number. Of these one hundred and nineteen were found in Australia, the United States trailing along a poor second with only nine.

The "Welcome Stranger" nugget, found at Dunolly, only a few inches below the surface, was a block of gold twenty-four inches long and ten inches thick and yielded two thousand, two hundred and forty-eight ounces of pure gold, valued at just under forty-nine thousand dollars. The "Welcome" nugget, found at Ballarat, weighed two thousand, two hundred and seventeen ounces and was sold for forty-six thousand dollars. The "Blanche Barkly", picked up at Kingower, at a depth of only fifteen feet, yielded seventeen hundred and forty-three ounces and was worth thirty-four thousand dollars. Another, weighing sixteen hundred and nineteen ounces, was part of a small rock slide that rolled into Canadian Gully.

This nugget was picked up by a widow just out from England and forthwith sold for twenty-six thousand dollars. This fortunate woman was of the stuff that make real pioneers. She had a family to support and, hearing of the Australian goldfields, she stowed her family aboard a sailing ship and came—and in the fifties a voyage more than half way around the world was no picnic. It could be said of her in truth, "She came; she saw; she conquered"—for the finding of this nugget was only the beginning.

"What any man can do, I can do," she said, and she did, both in Australia and in England, where, for thirty years after, she was a power in financial and social circles.

And what of the original stampeders? Few of the world's adventurers have been more suitably rewarded than was Edward Hammond Hargraves, officially recognized as the discoverer of gold in Australia. He gained wealth, a good position and a title, wore showy uniforms and became a public functionary, surrounded by an army of satellites. He received the appointment of Commissioner of Crown Lands. The British Government bestowed upon him a gift of fifty thousand dollars. The Government of Victoria a gift of twenty-five thousand dollars. New South Wales gave him a life pension of two thousand five hundred dollars per annum. Hargraves became a great man.

Of the others, Thomas Hiscock, who discovered Ballarat, died before he enjoyed much material reward. Harry Frenchman, discoverer of Golden Gully at Bendigo, became a wealthy woolman. Fortescue, the brilliant emancipist attorney, tossed away a fortune in the cause of his oppressed brethren in Ireland, but died poor. Marshal owned race-horses, envied alike by English peers and South African magnates. Nat Bayley and Charles Ford, the pair who later found gold in Western Australia, retired with great wealth.

The Australian gold rush must be reckoned among the world's great stampedes, one which yielded huge prizes to the few and good prizes for nearly all who had the high courage and cool foresight to take a chance.

CHAPAPEJOS

By ANTHONY M. RUD

Author of "Smoke", "Gila Joe", etc.

It was mocking Fate that decreed that Toi-Yabe Tolman, ex-outlaw but now law-abiding prospector, should come face to face with the one man who could identify him to the sheriff—and that that man should be Haj Maddox, in whose evil brain hate and vengeance were ever ready to seize the slightest opportunity for fresh plotting.

I

ONE man squatted on his heels before the Squeejaw saloon at Hartnett, and rolled brown paper cigarettes. In front of the Cactus Spine, two false-fronted frame buildings farther down the dusty street, a heavy-bodied counterpart of the idler lounged with bowed, muscle-bound legs thrust out in a concave-sided V on the shaded sand. He likewise rolled and smoked brown paper cigarettes.

Neither seemed to notice the other. Yet they had passed on horseback, warily. They knew each other only too well. If Toi-Yabe Tolman, the tall, desert-lean prospector who hunkered as he smoked, had guessed Haj Maddox was in town, the meeting would not have occurred. He hated Maddox, and despised him. Likewise he feared Maddox, as one may fear a rattler in his blanket.

Haj Maddox, an eighth-blood Pima, his father a Greek peddler with asthma—incidentally, named Socopoulos—was a hog-bodied, loose-mouthed, swarthy individual with black, close-set eyes. He had used many names for many crimes, usually of the petty or sneaking variety. Sometimes of a sort even less admirable. Unfortunately once the leader of the Silver Peak gang of stage robbers, of which notorious organization Toi-Yabe had been a lieutenant, had used Maddox as a go-between.

Just once. That had been enough. Even the flint-eyed leader of those outlaws, the ex-gambler, Cold Deck Diehl, lost control of himself and beat to a bruised pulp that apish, greasy thing in human form. And Diehl, who had learned boxing in the East, broke one of his valuable gambler's hands on the fellow.

Toi-Yabe thought it all over. His obvious move was to walk over, pick a quarrel, and shoot the bulky enemy full of holes. Then the world would be better off—and Toi-Yabe Tolman, owner now of a promising proved up claim inside the first ridge of the Red Chalk range, would not have the constant worry of a sheriff possibly on his trail. Over in Esmeralda—for what he had been careful to make seem good and sufficient reason—they thought him dead. They even had paid the reward to the individual who had come upon a certain body, and some of Toi-Yabe's undoubted possessions, at Golman's Well in the Corduroy Hills.

But Haj Maddox had started in genuine surprise and recognition. He grinned loosely, grunted a hail—unanswered. Then he looked back steadily, a set, sneering hate and triumph in his black eyes and puffy mouth. Toi-Yabe Tolman! Two thousand dollars walking around loose, provided at Silver Peak they'd pay the reward again. Probably they wouldn't. Anyway, certain plans just taking shape in the cunning mind of Haj—unspeakable things, they were—might easily fit themselves well to the presence of a fugitive outlaw. Whenever Haj became daring, it was because he saw his way clear to make another seem guilty of his crime. Once in New Mexico a man was hanged—but that is another story, better forgotten by men who like to believe justice and the law synonymous.

Toi-Yabe arose, snapped away his cigarette, turned and strode swiftly toward the Cactus Spine saloon. Thumbs hitched in his belt, hands ready for the deadly swoop and draw of .44s, he came straight to Haj Maddox. The latter squirmed, but did not dare attempt to get to his feet. His black irised eyes showed like bull's-eyes in discs of white.

"Yuh recognized me," said Toi-Yabe in a low, even tone. "Well, I'm

dead—an' aim to stay dead! Get me?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" came the hurried, slurred reply. "They pay the reward. Yo're dead, Toi-Yabe! I not goin' t' say nothin'."

"All right," snapped the ex-bandit. "Yo're a liar, an' worse. Jes' let me tell yuh suthin', though, snake—yuh ain't even a hombre! I got suthin' on down thisaway, an' I ain't alone! If yuh want to keep on livin', dust outa town!" His right hand fell to the wooden butt of a six-gun.

"Oh, yes, yes," smirked Haj, albeit his features still bore the print of fear. "I was goin' so quick, anyhow. I am bound onward, too far—a long ways, eh? I don' come back. Clear to Laramie!"

Toi-Yabe nodded once, briefly. Without deigning to look around again at the enemy who might have shot, he strode back to the rhombus-fronted, notorious Squeejaw—a crazy wooden shack ready to collapse with the first stiff wind, yet one of the most celebrated rendezvous and honkytonks in all southern Nevada.

But Haj Maddox had scuffled up furtively and dashed with short, padding steps to the deserted bar of the Cactus Spine. He needed a drink, several drinks. With enough of the peppered whisky under his belt he could plan hellishly. And now was the time for liquor! Already he had worked out a scheme which would have revolted an orang-utan; but earlier than the meeting with Toi-Yabe he had not picked his victim. Here was one, Toi-Yabe Tolman! Not until the fourth straight whisky did Haj really decide certainly upon the ex-bandit.

Haj grinned blackly, showing a few stumps of teeth to the bar mirror. Of a sudden he began talking owlishly, confidentially, to a bored bartender only too glad to listen. Haj wanted a quart to take along. He was going on, clear to Laramie. And he was starting right away. Right away! He staggered, clasped the stained cherry for support.

They do certain things even for men they distrust, down there at the desert's edge. The bartender did not try to dissuade Haj Maddox; that was not within the code. He gave over the quart of liquor, but saw it stowed at the bottom of a saddle pack. And the man in the white apron also filled Maddox's two canteens with fresh water. Then, as Haj clumsily mounted and rode away swaying in the saddle, the server of refreshment shrugged and shook his head.

"He'll never make through, damn' if he will!" was his muttered judgment. And then he forgot about Haj Maddox.

But the pudgy one's alibi was there, ready made for use if necessity demanded.

STONE BELLINGER was sheriff of Nye County. "Stun-Bruise,"[3] as was his cognomen from the valley of Great Salt Lake to this sandy hell's kitchen of Nevada, was forty-six, but looked older, and harder even than his nickname. He had been a cowman and a farmer, never a miner. He was a Mormon apostate and a bitter enemy of all things Mormon. Three emissaries came at various times from the Mormon State of Deseret, determined to kill him. Three grimly lettered crosses over at the Boot Hill at Hartnett revealed the gun speed and shrewdness of the quarry, and the stark courage, also.

Stun-Bruise had been a Mormon. He loved a Mormon girl and had no earlier wives. She smiled happily when he passed on horseback, raising his straight-brimmed, low-crowned hat. She loved him, but love on the part of woman was not then considered of importance in Deseret.

She was "sealed" for marriage with one of the Council whom she had not even seen—knowingly. She fled by night to the man of her heart's choice, and he rose to the occasion. He damned Mormonism briefly, and then fled the valley, finally distancing the secret Danite band of "Avenging Angels" which took his trail.

But less than a year later, a long way distant from the Mormon power and safe except from the assassin emissaries sent to extirpate those who found the shackles of Mormonism insupportable, a son was born to Stone Bellinger—a lusty, nine-pound youngster who yelled like a Piute the instant he was presented to his new surroundings.

Stone Bellinger did not know—or care. His girl wife was smiling weakly, trying to return the kisses he gave while the life ebbed from her slender, lovely body.

"Our boy!" she breathed. "You will—make him—a man like—you?" Mayhap that should not have been a question mark, but an exclamation point. But just then the girl mother for whom a strong man had thrown away his faith, his chance at wealth, his all save love, died. Her lips curved richly in a half-smile of confidence! She knew her fate, and smiled.

Stone's greatest weakness came to the surface then, unfortunately. Always he had been a hard man, just but inflexible—owing to the influence of his Mormon training, perhaps. Now he cursed harshly, holding himself and that little, red-cuticled atom responsible for his wife, Genevra's, death. True, he did not level an accusation even mentally against the tiny lad; yet the feeling overwhelmed paternal affection from the very first. He avoided sight of the infant. Getting an Indian woman to care for the baby temporarily, he then hired a widow at Tonopah, a rather coy lady of thirty who had one child of her own—and definite hopes still in the field of matrimony.

So four and one-half years passed. The widow, from the first honestly admiring Sheriff Stone Bellinger, took excellent care of little Dick, and, as the months grew into years, implanted in the baby mind a hero worship of the stern, hard-riding sheriff father. But those years ended it. A middle-aged assayer stopped for a time at Hartnett. The widow, despairing now of ever becoming Mrs. Stone Bellinger, smiled at the newcomer and used her wiles successfully. Dickie lost the nearest to a mother he ever had known.

The only other white woman of the region available then was Mrs. Thorgesson, a dull-featured, big-armed Scandinavian of forty-odd, the muscled, ignorant relict of a drunken miner. Mrs. Thorgesson seemed happy enough to leave her washboard, however. She plunged into housekeeping again and the care of a child with rough-handed enthusiasm. She sewed several pairs of red flannel kilts for Dickie.

And then, each time she was paid by Stone, she guzzled a quart or thereabouts of whisky and let the household run itself for thirty-six hours.

Dickie never had seen kilts before. He hated them and protested vehemently. But in the old country, kilts for boys had been up-to-date attire when Mrs. Thorgesson had been a *flicka*. Therefore she overruled his protests with a heavy hand. Once when Dickie, rebelious, had dared even to run to the father he rarely saw, Stone was not able to become outwardly sympathetic.

"Mebbe pretty soon he's big enough

for pants," he said gruffly, and strode out.

But nothing short of an outright command would have made an impression on the phlegmatic Mrs. Thorgesson. She grunted, fingering the money she had got. And then, when she was sure Stone had ridden out of town, she went to the Squeejaw honkytonk for her quart of liquor. An hour later she was singing hoarsely. There was no supper prepared that night for the youngster. He found some hard bread, and choked down a few bites of it through a throat constricted with a pain of tears which under the kindly care of his first foster-mother he had learned to repress.

He had fallen asleep, still clothed, when the rear door squeaked on its rusted hinges. He did not awaken, nor did the housekeeper hear. A crouching, bulbous shadow entered. For a moment it squatted in the doorway, then tiptoed into the shack. This time only petty pilfering was the purpose of the stealthy intruder, but on his next visit Haj Maddox would have a far more serious mission! He intended to fulfill that mission soon.

For the moment, though, he walked on tiptoe, a faint jangle coming from his Mexican spurs. In place of the empty, overturned whisky bottle beside the snoring housekeeper, Haj left a quart with seals unbroken. Then from a heap of clothing in one corner of the next room, he sorted out a pair of shoes and a pair of stockings—tiny size—and, grinning, fled with these to his horse.

After some trouble he had located the mining claim of Toi-Yabe Tolman. With the stealth which was his Pima heritage, Maddox would leave these stolen trifles of child attire somewhere thereabouts. He rode, grinning evilly. It might be possible even yet to collect that reward. At any rate he, Haj, would secure ample revenge upon Toi-Yabe, whom he hated. And then there would be the youngster—ransom, perhaps. That far in advance his brutish mind was content to figure only hazily.

DICKIE BELLINGER awoke ravenous. He scrambled up, jerked with a scowl at his rumpled kilts, and then ran in to the littered, reeking room of the housekeeper. "Old Torky," as he called her, still slept. She sprawled half off, half on the cot bed. Dickie scowled. He called to her, at first in a low, disapproving voice, but then louder. He was hungry; couldn't she understand?

This time she couldn't. She had awakened earlier and found the second bottle. It would be many, many hours before she took an interest in the affairs of her charge.

The hard lump tightened in the boy's throat. His lower lip quivered from its usual line of decision. He didn't want any more of that darn' hard bread. He was *hungry!*

An idea struck him. He went into his own room, and rummaged through a broken tomato packing case where he kept the odds and ends of his small possessions. He had money! He would go to Chong Yen's restaurant and buy bre'fuss, jes' like daddy did!

The money was in a bronze coin bank, the figure of an Indian. When shaken, it rattled faintly. Dickie knew how to get the money out; he had seen Old Torky do it. So now he pried and shook and shook; and finally out jingled the money—a dime and two nickels. That was all.

But the little fellow saw no discrepancy between that sum and the high prices for edibles chalked on the wall of Chong Yen's restaurant-laundry next door to the lantern-jawed, leering Squeejaw. He left the house, squaring his shoulders importantly, and marched down the dusty single street.

Chong Yen, thriftily utilizing the morning hours in washing for the town, came forward, arms soapy. Perhaps just the glint of surprised recognition showed in his seamed, parchment features.

"H'lo. How do, li'l fellah?" he questioned, wiping his arms.

"Bre'fuss! Me's hungry!" announced Dickie with careful nonchalance, standing on tiptoe to slap the twenty cents upon the lunch counter. Then, by stepping on the rail and kneeing up, he managed to mount one of the stools. The level of the board still came even with his chin.

"Lots o' bre'fuss!" he repeated, of a sudden an odd, unsure notelike wistfulness shaking the peremptory decision. After all, he was a very small boy, acting for the first time in his five years as a man of affairs.

Chong Yen looked at him, at the small change on the counter, and cast a brief, expressionless glance at his chalked menu—the least item of which was, *"Coffee—two-bits."*

But then a quick, subtle change came in his wooden features. Perhaps Chong Yen liked children. Perchance he recalled one time years before when he had been a newcomer in Hartnett, a day on which the father of this tiny lad intervened just when some drunken miners were engaged in the hilarious pastime of braiding his queue into the tail of a bronc with nervous heels.

At any rate he grinned and chuckled. He came around the counter.

"Missy Tolgesson dlunk?" he queried.

"Ye-ah!" said Dickie, with distaste and resentment.

"Huh!" grunted Chong Yen. He lifted Dickie from the stool and carried him back. There was a low, scrupulously clean board table, and a box which stood on end made an excellent chair. Forthwith the Chinaman set forth a dish of delicious canned peaches, which Dickie devoured, the while watching with anxious, glowing eyes the further preparations. Chong cut and sawed out the tenderloin of a choice beefsteak, and had it sizzling in no time. Hot rice, toasted bread, and a dish of beans with hot, crisped bacon—perhaps not the fare for a pampered baby, but Dickie did not know the taste of fresh milk, and was accustomed to hearty plain food. He ate till he could eat no more, then sighed vastly, getting down with difficulty. He never had been pampered.

"Fanks," he said—and then remembered the business side of the transaction. "I give you my money."

Chong grinned. Then his face quickly became impassive again.

"Suah!" he agreed, bowing. "Mak' change!" And with that he gravely passed back a dime and a nickel. In that transaction there was more understanding of his youthful customer than could have lain in the providing gratis of a dozen meals.

Before the Oriental let him leave, Dickie carried a neat bundle in which reposed two cheese and two ham sandwiches. Chong knew "Old Torky," and in an obscure way he was repaying a long cherished debt.

ON THE way back a Mexican lounger gratuitously insulted Dickie—right at a moment when the boy's pride had swelled almost to the bursting point!

"Buenos dias, nina!" he greeted

mockingly, doffing his sombrero and showing white, even teeth in a wide grin.

Dickie gasped. Little girl, indeed! His chin came up with a snap and his tiny fists clenched. He ignored the lounger, but his steps hurried, became uneven, and a rosy flush overwhelmed his cheeks and flowed over the back of his neck. *Nina!* It was those darn', *darn'* kilts! Oh why couldn't he have pants like a big man—an'—an' chaps like daddy wore?

Stone Bellinger alone, among the prospectors, miners and general drifters at Hartnett, wore leather chaparejos as he rode. A cowman he had been, and a cowman sheriff he would remain, even though his lot was cast among other sorts of Westerners. The nearest ranch of any sort lay in the secluded Demijohn Valley, forty-five miles to the northeast.

The last steps Dickie took at a run, flinging himself inside the shack and slamming the door. Dry sobs were in his throat, but no tears flowed. He saw without caring that Old Torky had not come to consciousness. Darn her anyway! Darn her for making him wear kilts.

But then he looked into his own disordered room, and what he saw spilled on a table brought a flash of inspiration. A sewing basket had been overturned. Shears—chaps! Maybe pants, too!

He closed Old Torky's door silently and tiptoed back to the table. There were the implements! Hastily seizing scissors and a paper of safety pins that lay on top, he dropped to the floor and scrambled under the table. There he pulled the cover down until he was screened from any casual observer who might come into the room, and went busily to work.

Poking the sharp-pointed shears through the material of his red kilts at the waistline in front, he sawed his way down the weave of the cloth until a last chew of the none-too-sharp shears severed the binding at the bottom. This made the kilts gape open alarmingly in front, but Dickie stuck manfully to his task, his fingers trembling from over-zealousness and a rush of excitement.

Straining his rounded stomach into smallest compass, he managed to turn the kilts completely around so that the slit was exactly at the back. Then he repeated the process with the scissors, cutting a new slit down the opposite side of the kilts. This finished, he dropped the shears from his trembling fingers and seized the paper of safety pins. A little flush of triumph rose in his face as he succeeded in pinning together the bottom flaps around above his right knee. Here were his trousers! In his excitement he stuck the point of a pin deep in his finger, but went on, disregarding the pain.

In a trice he had fastened three pins in his right pants-leg, and two in the left. That would do, because somehow or other he couldn't make his fingers work to fasten the other pin. He tiptoed again to the hall door and listened.

Old Torky snored. Triumphant, Dickie flushed as he looked down at his handiwork. On the wall hung a cracked mirror the beloved daddy used when he shaved. Dickie climbed up and secured it. His blue eyes glistened with pleasure then as he held the glass this way and that, reflecting the metamorphosed kilts. Course they weren't exactly pants, but they were a lot better than those darn', darn' things!

Now if he only had chaparejos to wear outside!

The drive of inspiration was in him, though. He looked down. On the littered floor was an old fragment of rag carpet, raveled at the edges and

The sheriff unrolled the bundle

stiff with dirt. Dickie caught his breath. The chaps! Sitting down with the dull shears, he forthwith attacked the ancient fabric.

It proved a long, slow job, one which made his hand and wrist ache fiercely. The hours dragged along. In the other room Old Torky ceased snoring, and groaned heavily. Then there was the sound of a staggering step, a gurgle as of liquid being decanted—another gurgle. Then by and by, a creak of cot springs. And finally another snore.

Dicky had sawed out one long, irregular triangle of rug and affixed it by pins and raveling tied together, when his aching arm and the demands of his stomach made him call a halt. He remembered the sandwiches, and forthwith ate them all. It was long past noon.

Later, the joy of creation a trifle dulled, but determination unimpaired, he started the task of sawing out a duplicate, growing heavy-eyed as the shadows crept down from the westward buttes.

II

UT in a valley of the Red Chalk Range, Toi-Yabe Tolman frowned down puzzledly at a pair of small shoes and a pair of child's stockings he had found behind a boulder. He looked about him. A kid of some kind! The valley, though, was as silent as a dead desert calm; even his own animals were not grazing on the sparse vegetation jus then. He was sure that no one else could be within miles—and certain also, or nearly so, that these garments had not been behind the boulder the day before. Why, he had sat on that stone to eat his beans and pan biscuit! Yet he might have overlooked them, as he had been thinking almost entirely of Haj Maddox and what that treacherous coyote might be expected to do with his knowledge that the ex-bandit, Toi-Yabe Tolman, still lived.

Toi-Yabe rolled up the shoes and stockings and tossed them back to the place he had found them. Then he looked deep into the crannies of the narrow cave he used as a provision cache, and later devoted a half hour to a climb, reaching a spot which gave him a bird's-eye view of the valley. But beside a pair of far buzzards slowly circling, no living thing was in sight. He returned to his labor with drill, pick and shovel.

Unaware of the net being woven for him, he labored in the shaft he was sinking diagonally downward at a right-angle to the slanting side of the bare mountain. Float gold was plentiful about the claim he owned. Low grade ore also was present in irregular veins two feet below the surface, separated and broken by white, barren bull quartz. The low grade ore rep-

resented a certain, though small, sale value on account of the nearness to Hartnett and the rail head at Lamar; yet Toi-Yabe, always a firm believer in rich float gold as a certain index of the nearness of a mother lode—a theory which has made dozens of prospectors very rich, and thousands destitute—chose to ignore the $250 a ton rock and delve on the gambler's chance.

That evening, crouched with frying-pan and coffee pot before a small blaze of mesquite twigs, Toi-Yabe suddenly heard the click of steel on rock, the sounds of a shod horse approaching! With possible trouble stirred up by Haj Maddox foremost in mind, Toi-Yabe slid quickly from the firelight to the protection of a boulder, hands dropping to his six-guns.

"Howdy!" came a hail in a tired voice. "'Sall right, hombre. It's me —Stone Bellinger."

Undoubtedly that news would have been reassuring to many; Toi-Yabe was not certain that he welcomed it. He let the sheriff approach and dismount from his lathered roan, however, and then emerged.

"Wasn't sure," he apologized gruffly.

"Uh-huh," acknowledged Stone, uncinching. "Got enough water?"

Toi-Yabe merely gestured at the narrow black aperture which housed his water cans and grubstake. Bellinger investigated, poured a panful for the roan and a drink for himself. Then he slouched back to the fire, poured himself a cup of coffee, and accepted the tin plate heaped with beans and bacon, tendered by Toi-Yabe, with a nod of acknowledgement.

Such was desert hospitality given and taken by men almost a match in sternness and taciturnity. Toi-Yabe, realizing that the sheriff simply had chanced upon the claim at the end of a long ride and had grasped the chance to rest his horse, would not have spoken during the moments of smoking that followed except that he remembered the curious find made that day. Reaching back of the boulder, he brought up the small roll of shoes and stockings he had discovered, and tossed them across the fire.

"Ever see any yonkers up thisaway?" he queried. "These was lyin' here when I come back from town."

The officer unrolled the bundle. Then a frown gathered on his forehead. Why, those things looked about big enough for his own kid—really something like the duds he'd seen on Dickie a few times! But of course there was no possible way Dickie could get out here, he assumed. Besides his own son, however, Stone Bellinger strove in vain to recall any children this size in the region outside of a few Mexican babies down at Tres Casas, and these, of course, wore neither shoes nor stockings.

"Yuh say yuh ain't seen any party up this side of the Red Chalk?" he questioned, glancing keenly up through graying brows. He did not know or ask the name of his host; a shrewd judge of men was Stone Bellinger, a man who cared nothing for names or ready-made reputations.

"Nope." Toi-Yabe's answer was laconic, final.

Bellinger considered.

"Then I reckon I'll tote 'em along with me, in the mornin'," he concluded. And he went to roll up in his blankets, without further ado.

Next morning he was up in the false dawn's graying, before Toi-Yabe, built a fire, fed and watered the roan, made the coffee, and prepared a simple meal. Seeing that the prospector still slumbered—apparently only; Toi-Yabe was not altogether sure of the sheriff's intentions—Stone ate quickly and in silence, then set the coffee pot on the dying embers, saddled, and rode away toward Golman's Well. Toi-Yabe waited until the clicking of hoofs died away into silence before thrusting back a revolver into its holster and arising. He grinned a trifle wryly; a year before, it would have been courting sudden death for him to have camped a night with any sheriff!

N HOUR later, with his drilling for a small blasting charge completed, Toi-Yabe affixed a cap and generous length of fuse to the sticks of forty per cent. He lighted the sputtering cord with its heart of black powder, then hastened over to the gully in which the animals were tethered. The burros could be counted on; they knew dynamite; but Cochise, the pinto pony, always snorted and reared, a wild, straining whiteness coming into his eyes. Only when Toi-Yabe was near could he be prevented from going into a nervous frenzy.

Seconds elapsed. Then a satisfying *grroommm!* announced that the tamping had been effective; that the force of the giant powder had been exerted downward, as well as in the direction of the shaft mouth.

As if that explosion had been an awaited signal, a sudden, faint *pop-popping* began, borne to Toi-Yabe seemingly from over the low mountain into which he was driving the shaft. He listened, tense, making certain that the gun battle—for the character of that fast shooting was unmistakable —was not in his valley, though probably just beyond the ridge. Then he shrugged. It was none of his affair. He went back to examine the shaft, bending to fan away the poisonous fumes with broad-brimmed Stetson before sliding down.

A cursory glance was rather disappointing. The rock showed no marked change in character, being if anything a trifle more barren in appearance. But suddenly Toi-Yabe became quiet, crouched on one knee. He had heard a most curious sound, one which brought every desert trained faculty into play! A low, rushing murmur came to his ears!

That instant he became aware, too, that a strange coolness was seeping in around his lowered knee and shin. Quickly he bent lower, testing with his ear, sniffing carefully. He heard it more plainly now. Water! He was near a subterranean stream or spring, that almost priceless discovery in this arid range! Water! If cool and sweet, it would allow him uninterrupted search for treasure, and comfort beyond imagining!

At last he found the tiny crevice through which a distinct chill of air rose in a steady current. With his ear to the crack he could hear the murmuring rush of waters even more distinctly. Feverishly then, forgetting for the time all thoughts of gold, he widened the crack, and into it thrust a prepared dynamite cartridge. Lighting the fuse, he scrambled out and away. Such was his haste he did not glimpse a furtive, oddly clad little figure on an abutment of rock just above.

Thoroughly frightened, gasping for breath after his flight and climb to escape the terrible man who had snatched him from his bed before dawn that morning, Dickie Bellinger wanted to climb down and speak to the tall, lean prospector—but had been too much in the grip of terror. One of the safety pins had opened, allowing the top of his rough cut "chaps" to drag behind as he crawled on hands and knees, but he paid it no attention now. He wanted someone, anyone—even Old Torky would have been welcome. So he came closer to that funny hole where the big man had gone.

He was close enough now so he could almost rubberneck over and see the man, when suddenly the latter reappeared, scrambling, running. Toi-Yabe had used only a short length of fuse this time, and he possessed a wholesome respect for dynamite.

Dickie stared, bewildered. What made that funny man run in and out of that hole? Was it the big *bang* he had heard?

That second, while Toi-Yabe still sprinted for the horse, Dickie's questions were answered decisively. Of a sudden a hideous, jarring roar blasted his ears. The rock upon which he crouched, quaked and leaped, throwing him sidewise, and the shock drove consciousness from him. He saw a swirl of black and green; then he knew no more.

It was as well. Though protected by a foot-high sleeve of rim rock so that none of the upflung débris struck him directly, Dickie had perched on a battered ledge which had been about to slide of its own weight. The second shock was just enough; unostentatiously nine hundred pounds of rock, cracking to fragments, broke away, hesitated, then slumped gently into the prospect shaft, bearing on its top a tattered, unconscious little five-year-old who on this morning alone had lived through enough perils for a lifetime.

Toi-Yabe was delayed a few minutes in spite of his impatience. The pinto, Cochise, just then decided he had quite enough of these rumbling explosions, and acted fractious. So Toi-Yabe saw neither the small avalanche nor the figure of Dickie.

But he came on as soon as possible; and it was while fanning the fumes with his Stetson that he caught sight of something decidedly strange there in the bottom of the shaft. Was that the yellow, curly head of a child, for the love of heaven? He blinked, gasped as sudden, icy dread clutched his heart. His mind raced. The shoes and stockings—the sheriff's pointed question—

Had he killed some little youngster unknowingly?

III

EVEN as these thoughts flashed through his mind he was scrambling down, however. He lit sliding in the loose rock. It was a child, a boy, half buried, but still breathing! Toi-Yabe flung himself to his knees, tearing away the rock with his finger.

"God, I *hope* he ain't hurt!" he half prayed in the stress of anxiety.

Just then came an odd straining creak from the floor and the rock walls about him; supposedly solid as they were, just then they moved slowly an inch, two——

But Toi-Yabe was lifting out the youngster, noting with increasing bewilderment the queer attire—and the fact that Dickie wore both shoes and stockings. Hurriedly examining the child, Toi-Yabe could discover naught save a multitude of small bruises. Just then Dickie sighed and moved in Toi-Yabe's arms.

"Oh—oh!" he gasped. "Torky! Oh!"

"'Sall right, old-timer. All O. K.," broke in the prospector, vastly relieved. "I'll have yuh fixed up an' goin' strong in jes' a second. I wonder how in hell yuh ever got——"

He rose to his feet, bearing Dickie with one arm and stamping a way over the loose rock toward the upward slant. Right there a black aperture, through which cold air rushed vehemently, separated the floor from the side wall —and inch by inch, to the accompaniment of weird creaks, that crack was widening alarmingly!

Toi-Yabe saw and understood—just too late. A cry ripped from his throat, and he sprang for the slant. But as one boot was upraised to catch a foothold, suddenly and with no further ostentation, a rough circle of foot-thick rock—the thin floor of the shallow shaft—dropped downward into unmeasured blackness!

Toi-Yabe, holding fast to Dickie, pitched forward, an involuntary cry bursting from his set, dry lips, and one arm grabbing widely and seizing—nothing! Tumbling headlong, he went into the black, fathomless pit. In the brief split second of falling he touched nothing; and gave himself up for lost. There was no telling how deep might be this awesome subterranean cavern.

He found out almost instantly. With a ripping splash which reverberated from close-constricting walls, the section of rock ceiling struck the surface of a black, sweeping, almost silent river hastening on its way beneath the rock arches to the flume which gave it back to the daylight in the far, almost inaccessible canyon of the Virgin River.

Toi-Yabe and his companion in misfortune struck the upflung spray in falling; and then his breath was caught from him in a constricted gasp. He clove the surface of an icy stream, was caught by the full force of the deep current, and fought with a reaction of furious energy against the whirling, sucking current, against the bruising outthrusts of the rock wall, and above all against the unbelievable chill of this subterranean river.

The immersion brought a choked outcry of terror from Dickie, coming abruptly to consciousness. With childish instinct he flung both arms about the neck of Toi-Yabe and held on with all his strength. It was, perhaps, the best thing possible, as Toi-Yabe, in the following seconds, could not even spare the use of one arm.

This was no sunken spring of the desert, gradually cooled by its hidden course. In its majestic onsweep could be recognized the force of miles of descent and the pull of a predetermined outlet. In its gripping cold was the taste of far distant snows of the high Sierras.

Hampered as he was by Dickie, by heavy boots, crisscrossed belts with their weights of cartridges and holstered six-guns, Toi-Yabe struggled for every breath he drew. Much of the time, as helpless as a curled piñon chip in a whirlpool, he was drawn beneath the surface, flung sidewise or end-on against slime-smoothed granite, or bruised by obstacles in the curving course.

He scraped his fingernails along a slippery wall, and then without warning was tossed to the far side of the river. There he struck with stunning force against something which held him a moment in spite of the dragging power of the relentless river. Instinctively he clutched and, though his fingers slipped as if trying for a hold on buttered brass, this was a rock formation of such shape that he was allowed to grip one elbow about it, clasping his own bent wrist. Instantly he was swirled about, his boots swinging to the surface as his body skittered as a float of little appreciable weight.

"Hold on, kid!" he gasped.

Only then did he truly come to grips with the immensity of the stream's momentum. For several seconds he held on, breathing in great gasps of the chill air, coughing and choking out the water which had descended to his lungs.

He did not dodge comprehension of the issue. If once he let go of this upright column which, like an I-beam, let the flood roar past on both sides, both of them were finished. He never would

have the stamina to struggle again with the sweep of the current. Slowly and with infinite carefulness he drew himself back to a precarious kneeling position against the sloping pedestal base of the I-beam. The fingers of one hand explored upward, but found nothing save added inches of the slippery column.

If he only could see! Little hope stirred in his mind that even at the top of this sliver of granite lay anything promising escape; yet in the very fiber of Toi-Yabe Tolman was that deep-wedged *élan* of the battler; that flexibility of ready, combative spirit which takes emergencies and perils exactly as they come, and compresses from each the full blood of opportunity.

An opportunity to determine just how bad really was his plight came to mind. He edged closer to the pillar, slipped from the rounded pedestal nearly losing his grip, then slowly won back until he could hold his weight against the current with his left elbow and hand. Then he reached to his right holster. The revolver was gone!

His lips set grimly, yet he did not falter. In the long, careful process of shifting back so that he could reach the other gun he reflected sardonically that if a few million thirsty animals like his own tethered and deserted burros and pinto back there in the arid valley just could get at this river for a while—upstream, of course—he'd be able to wade out of the damned thing!

THE second Colt was there. He lifted it, flirted it sidewise and back to remove as much water as possible, and then pulled the trigger. *Click!* One cartridge, at least, had been ruined by the immersion. This time his thumb drew back the hammer and released it in one smooth motion. The muzzle shot red-yellow fire into the dripping blackness, and the explosion of the big revolver, caught and thrown back by the cramping ceiling, was deafening.

But Toi-Yabe did not care. He even grinned.

"Hold it, kid!" he cautioned again.

There, only two feet above the level of his head, ran a smooth, yard-wide ledge—probably a high-water mark of some day long past, or perhaps the remnant of a river bed which once existed when this stream held far greater volume!

The problem was ticklish enough. Climbing to the ledge meant mounting to the sloping base of the pillar, straightening upward, securing some sort of hold in a crevice or outcrop on the floor of the ledge. Kneeling, with one arm crooked about the upright rock, he just could reach across and touch the finger-tips of one hand to the sharp edge. Between pillar and wall below the ledge swift water swirled.

Twice he essayed to stand, and both times the impossibility of obtaining a dependable foothold was emphasized by bruising falls against the pillar and back into the water. Once only a quick grab of both arms saved him from being swept away.

Now in spite of his great reserves of strength he felt the dulling of exhaustion. His shoulders ached. The feet in his watersoaked boots had numbed into clods. He still could move them from the knees and ankles, but sensation had departed.

"Freezin'!" he muttered. "Hope yo're warmer'n I am, little feller!"

Gaining the kneeling position again by slow, painful degrees, he reached down one hand carefully and unbuckled one of his two crossed cartridge belts, that which held the empty holster of his right-hand gun.

He slipped the fraction of an inch; clutched and froze. Then inch by inch with infinite caution, he encircled the slender pillar with the strap, while holding the buckle clamped between his teeth. A leaning forward—a meeting of the two ends—a quick pull.

He made an inarticulate noise of triumph, one that was chopped into jiggling syllables by his irresponsible teeth. The belt was in place! It hung slantingly in the water with the loop of the cartridges below. Toi-Yabe tested it with one hand, found that it could slip no lower. Then he reached about and loosened the viselike grip about his neck, securing a sound hold of the terrified, speechless child.

That instant he thrust one knee into the loop, drew up the other foot, and stood erect! From that position it was easy enough to cross the narrow gap to the ledge.

Upon hands and knees, little Dickie close beside him, feeling his way upon the down-slope of the ledge, Toi-Yabe started in the direction of the spot where he had dropped from surface of the valley above. Far, far up-stream there would be a hole in the roof of this cavern, and light—if nothing else hopeful. It seemed too much to expect that he could negotiate a way to the point where his mishap had occurred and there manage to climb to the hole. Yet this seemed the greatest chance. Probably it was the only one.

The two made rather rapid progress for a time, Toi-Yabe keeping his left hand upon the outside edge and groping forward and sidewise with his right before going ahead. Always he held Dickie inside. Once the ledge narrowed to little more than two feet of width. Here a wedge of the rock had dropped away, too. By sitting down, letting his boots touch the surface of the stream again, he managed to lift himself and the boy along the broken causeway, however, to the reassuring widening beyond where the ledge rose a trifle. He breathed freer.

The relief was short-lived. Three

The two made rapid progress for a time

or four yards beyond, Toi-Yabe's left hand found a sharp right-angle in the edge, and his groping right encountered nothingness! He inched forward, lifted out the Colt revolver. A shot blazed into the inky darkness, causing Dickie to cry out and shrink close. During the momentary life of that red-yellow flare Toi-Yabe saw that what he had dreaded most lay before him. This was the end of the ledge! True, ten or twelve yards beyond a six-inch sliver of horizontal rock still clung to the arching tunnel wall, yet all the rest had broken away. Since manifestly it was impossible to cross the stream or breast the current, they could proceed no farther in this direction.

But one alternative remained, and Toi-Yabe, his wide mouth tightened, played it. He turned and slowly made his way with the lad back through the pitch blackness. Time for them did not exist. Since they had fallen into the water he supposed several hours had elapsed; and now, with every prospect of another blind end to his ledge of comparative safety, he was tortured by the picture of the suffering he had brought upon the child—suffering borne uncomplainingly, however.

AT THE break in the ledge where the black, speeding surface curved on two feet below he leaned, cupped his hand, and drank, then offering some to Dickie. The water was hard with mineral, yet it lacked even a trace of alkaline bitterness. This showed clearly that for a long distance upstream, at least, the river did not see the surface and daylight. Though Toi-Yabe never was to ascertain the fact, the stream likewise kept to its subterranean channel until it mingled its substance with that of the stern Virgin, bound for a mating with the great Colorado.

Time unmarked, unguessed, crawled along. When he was tolerably certain that he had passed the pillar which had given him access to the ledge, Toi-Yabe halted and fired, desiring another brief glimpse. There right ahead, a few yards, was the self-same pillar or another exactly like it! Such similarity was not probable. Toi-Yabe grimaced. The progress of the two was like that of a heavy lizard, yet he certainly had believed they must have traversed much more than this distance. He continued the grim, almost hopeless journey, speaking brief words of encouragement to Dickie.

He reached what seemed the end, indeed. A cave-in of the wall had filled the ledge with loose rock. One large, jagged chunk in particular blocked the way. The remaining shots from Toi-Yabe's six-gun revealed that the blockade extended over a width of only four or five feet, though for all he could do in climbing, the burdened ledge itself might as well have given away.

Methodically reloading the weapon, the prospector probed forward with one hand leading his charge. He soon found that the risk of clinging to this jutting as he edged about would be a poor chance, indeed. Loose rock slivers fell away, and more came from the wall. Instead of attempting this, Toi-Yabe dug carefully with his fingers, lifting out pieces of granite and dropping them in the stream. Soon he met the large boulder. Tentatively he wrenched, and then crowded back in quick alarm. With a grinding crash quickly followed by a splash the overbalanced weight of granite fell into the stream!

Toi-Yabe, who had dared hope for no such immediate success, quickly seized Dickie, and edged past the spot upon which more rock might fall at any moment. He found himself upon a broadening, ascending curve of the ledge, where the low, rushing mutter of the onyx waters seemed to die away. Here, though he did not pay it much attention, the stream dived still deeper in a brief arc. Along the breast of this curve sheer centrifugal force threw outward small whitecaps, invisible now.

A dozen yards more, and then Toi-Yabe stopped, quivering—and not from the cold which had left his veins there while he wrestled with the cave-in of rock. Unless hope deceived his eyesight, ahead and high on the same side he traveled, was a faint but discernible streak of gray! It had to be light; and the presence of light in this tunnel could mean nothing save an aperture in the ceiling—possibly just such a break in the floor of the valley as that one through which Toi-Yabe and the lad had come into peril!

It was characteristic of the tall, lean ex-bandit that an unexpected hope, instead of causing him to rush forward in an impulse of tumultuous relief, held him quiet one interminable minute, arm around Dickie, considering. Then he drew the newly loaded six-gun, snapped two spoiled cartridges, and obtained an explosion from the third.

But he saw little during the brief flash, except that a ten-foot ledge inclined upward. He rose to his feet.

"Looks good, little feller," he said.

"I'm c-cold!" chattered Dickie.

That second, from perhaps fifty yards in front and above him, a shot blazed forth in answer to his own! The leaden slug went *pttt* upon some part of the rock wall, then whined on in ricochet. Almost the same instant a second flash and report came; where the bullet went Toi-Yabe did not know. He thrust Dickie behind him. His gaze was fastened upon the broad way gently inclining upward in a slow curve; he had caught an ephemeral glimpse of a crouching figure there at the top of the slope.

Toi-Yabe dropped to his elbow, forcing Dickie to lie down.

"Stay right there, pard!" he whispered. Reloading the fired chambers of the .44, he shifted his single remaining belt holster to the rear and began the Indian stalk. The other man had all the advantage, yet Toi-Yabe, obsessed by a gnawing sympathy for the lad whose life had been thrust into his hands, was in no mood to compromise. More than once he had fought to a finish with an opponent in the chaparral; his bandit days were filled with such encounters. Now with the gray light high to the right becoming more and more plain, he was ready to exercise every wile and kill without mercy this unknown man who obstructed the road.

Another might have cried out, attempting parley—and surely failing, as circumstances were ordered. Toi-Yabe, believing that the skulker above would think him hugging the inside wall, bellied forward on the very brink of the river. Now he saw vaguely the wide flat of a horizontal lie of the ledge, though strive as he might he could distinguish no hint of his unknown opponent.

A third shot blazed. This time Toi-Yabe saw momentarily the man's head and extended arm. Yet Toi-Yabe held his fire. He knew now where the other was waiting, and went for that spot with a minimum of delay. Knowing that he himself was shielded by an impenetrable blackness, Toi-Yabe covered the yards swiftly but noiselessly, keeping to the outside.

The grayness was becoming more pronounced. Toi-Yabe saw that it must come from a ceiling aperture

some distance beyond and to the side of his quarry. It did not show up the bed of the ledge, however. So, following a rapid approach of what he estimated to be forty yards, Toi-Yabe assumed his slow crawl again, leaving the outside for the first time. In a hand-to-hand tussle, as this well might prove to be, he preferred the rock wall at his back.

Who could be the man who was ready to dispute with lead any encroachment upon this peculiar subterranean preserve? What was his reason for jealousy? Toi-Yabe, creeping forward, would have liked an answer to both questions.

IV

THE expected gunfight to a decision did not occur. Toi-Yabe had crawled at least far enough, he thought. Still, he heard a sound ahead. It was the aspiration of slow but jerky breathing! Then came a low groan, some muttered unintelligible words.

Toi-Yabe frowned. A futile decoy! He edged toward the sound, however, rose to his feet. His thumb held back the filed hammer of his six-gun. He hoped grimly that it did not misfire again from a water-soaked cartridge when he came to the showdown.

Outside in the big sunlit world a mere handful of nimbus had been over the sun for a space of minutes. Alone in a painfully blue Nevada sky, the cloud held on a while, and then gave up. In another clime it might have been thought the precursor of a storm; here it was something to be looked at and viewed with wonder. Of course no rain was expected.

Toi-Yabe did not know anything of the cloud; yet as he inched along, waiting to kill a man whose hand had fired three times at him—and without excuse—he saw the gray light brighten, become even intense! The broad ledge gradually became limned by reflected sunlight.

Then Toi-Yabe saw his man!

The prospector did not fire immediately—and eventually did not fire at all. The fact was that with the growing light of the inducted sun he saw a figure sprawled out, face against the rock and right hand limply holding a weapon, far ahead.

Toi-Yabe watched, his thumb holding back the hammer of the Colt. Thus he stood while long seconds ticked by.

Then he walked forward a step, two silent steps, three. After due deliberation he reached the prone body, quickly secured its two revolvers and made certain the man had no knife or derringer concealed.

After that Toi-Yabe looked more closely at his antagonist, finding him unconscious. He was Sheriff Bellinger!

Repressing his unbounded astonishment, Toi-Yabe hurriedly brought up Dickie, and then examined the wounded sheriff. The latter was wounded twice. One bullet had passed through the right side rather shallowly; whether or not it had damaged a vital organ the prospector could not determine. The second leaden slug had shattered Bellinger's right shinbone, and undoubtedly was more painful if not as dangerous. The sheriff had lost a great deal of blood. Toi-Yabe, utilizing the other's own clothes for bandages and a rude compress, managed to check the flow—albeit from the pools of blood on the rocky floor he doubted seriously that Stone Bellinger ever would recover consciousness.

"Daddy!" cried the boy, when first he glimpsed the face of the inert man.

He squirmed away from Toi-Yabe, to run to the side of his idol—the man who from the first had chosen the grim pursuit of the law's vengeance rather than the love he himself had helped to create.

"The hell!" gasped Toi-Yabe Tolman. This affair had grown too complicated for even his keen abilities in analysis. The kid belonged to the sheriff. The sheriff had half-recognized the shoes and stockings, apparently. He, Toi-Yabe, unwittingly had imperiled the lad, only to save him from the subterranean river—and find at the other end of the cavern Stone Bellinger, ready to fight to the last gasp against someone! And then, there was the memory of that rapid gunfire heard across the ridge—shooting which occurred only a short time after the sheriff departed from Toi-Yabe's camp. What did it all mean?

He drew Dickie away, comforting the lad, assuring him that the daddy would be all right after he'd had a good long sleep—phrasing hope rather than certainty. Then by tactful questions he drew from the boy a lurid, nightmarish tale of being snatched from bed, gagged, and carried away by a big, fat man on horseback. Toi-Yabe obtained a serviceable description of that big, fat man, and his mouth drew into a line. Haj Maddox! What the fool's idea could have been was hard to discern, yet motives now were unimportant. Maddox once and for all had placed himself beyond the pale of sympathy or toleration. Only justice could await him now.

The running fight down the neighboring valley with the sheriff riding hard in pursuit and shooting only at the legs of Haj's fleeing animal, in order not to wound his own son, Dickie gave with a dramatic force entirely unconscious. Haj, terrified at the unexpected meeting which jettisoned his scheme in an instant, thought only of his own escape. Riding as hard as he could force the cayuse, he came to rocky, uneven ground down among the cave formations, steadily losing his lead over the relentless Bellinger.

A sudden idea came to the fleeing criminal. Passing a black crevice in the hillside, one which looked like it might drop to the bowels of the earth, Haj bent from the saddle and tossed Dickie into it. He figured Stone Bellinger would stop, and that was exactly what the sheriff did—but for another reason.

Both men fired, and both scored hits. Bellinger tumbled from the saddle, while ahead of him the horse of Haj Maddox stumbled and pitched headlong, dying. And then, while both men were dazed, little Dickie scrambled up and climbed to escape them, unaware that his own father was one of the creatures of this terribly real nightmare.

Later, Haj realized that now he was committed. Either the sheriff and his boy died right then and there, or Haj could plan on stretching hemp. Shots were exchanged. Bellinger was wounded again, but managed to crawl to the sheltering crevice. Grinning like a wolf, Haj Maddox was satisfied. He did not dream of another entrance to that cavelike hole. He settled, six-gun in hand, to await the appearance of either the boy or man. He would be in no danger; this sort of pot-shot gun-fighting suited him right down to the ground.

Toi-Yabe did not learn all of this from Dickie, yet he could surmise the situation. His face took on the hammered bronze expression well known to his old associates of bandit days, the killer's mask. He removed his own watersoaked belt and gun, replacing it with the sheriff's two belts and long-barreled Remingtons. He hefted the weapons, saw that they were freshly

loaded, and then slipped them up and down in their holsters. Then, cautioning Dickie to remain beside his father, he climbed up the narrow way to the irregular opening to the sunlight.

KNOWING the cowardly Maddox of old, Toi-Yabe felt certain that the kidnapper would be ambushed close to the mouth of the cavern, waiting like a bloated spider to pounce upon its prey. The chief fact, then, to be determined, was the exact direction and whereabouts of the ambush. Just back of the shielding slate overhang which made an elbow of the crevice at ground level, he froze to immobility, listening.

Yet it was not through the sense of hearing that Toi-Yabe discovered the necessary information. Not a sound came to him. Haj, if he were there, had found a restful position, apparently, and was enjoying the anticipatory wait.

Toi-Yabe suddenly sniffed gently. Borne to him, diffused but yet pungent, came an aroma he recognized, one which set up within him the acute appetite of long deprivation—cigarette smoke! The smoke reached his nostrils, but where did it come from? There was almost no breeze at all.

Then he suddenly tautened. A wisp of bluish gray fumes, holding together, drifted lazily across his vision, coming from the left. Well, Haj was there. One time was as good as another. Crouching, his muscles coiled like steel springs, he drew both guns. Then with a wild, terrific shout of jeering triumph, he leaped up like a jack-in-the-box and alighted—running, and shooting! He had one brief glimpse of Haj Maddox, back against one boulder while his left elbow rested on another. Maddox shot. Toi-Yabe shot twice while scarcely on the ground. All three bullets went wild. Then Toi-Yabe, chuckling in sinister fashion, dove behind the identical boulder which sheltered his enemy!

"I've come for yore ears, Maddox!" Toi-Yabe chuckled in a blood-curdling tone. "Be sayin' yore prayers, hombre, if yuh got any." He went on without cessation, the while watching eagle-eyed for the slightest glimpse of the criminal who huddled on the other side of the rock.

Toi-Yabe knew his man. The leap and yell had been carefully calculated, and successful. Now, while possessing no real advantage in position or otherwise over Maddox, Toi-Yabe played deliberately for the yellow streak he firmly believed Maddox possessed. As the assortment of threats and promises came about the four-foot boulder, the shrinking, appalled kidnapper's nerve broke. "I ain't got no fight with yuh, Toi-Yabe!" he quavered at last. "Le's call it quits."

"No quits!" retorted Toi-Yabe. He calmly shot away an inch of Stetson rim which showed for an instant at one side of the sheltering boulder. "Throw yore guns away, an' reach for the sky!"

"Yuh ain't goin' to——"

"I'll count five! Then I'm comin'! One—two—three——"

"I—I give up!" came the yelp of terror seemingly unadulterated.

A pair of six-guns clanked to the rocks, and the green-swarthy, hatless head and two upraised arms of Haj Maddox appeared. An odd, desperate gleam shone from his black beads of eyes, nevertheless.

At a loss to account for it for a second, Toi-Yabe studied his prisoner. Then he noted that Haj's hands were held aloft palms backward—and he smiled grimly. An old trick, but good at times.

"A'right. Come here," he bade, seeming to let his revolvers droop carelessly.

It seemed to be what Haj had hoped to see. With a sound between a grunt and squeal, he suddenly yanked down his right hand.

That same split second a slug from one of the big Remington's smashed through his navel. The stratagem had failed. Haj's palmed derringer exploded, indeed, just as he buckled, screaming, but the bullet merely smudged a whitish streak upon the rock between Toi-Yabe's feet and ricocheted away.

Merciless, grim, Toi-Yabe lifted the dead body of Maddox and dragged it far down the valley, dropping it without ceremony. Then he returned to Dickie and his father.

Bellinger was conscious.

"Did yuh get him?" he queried in a whisper.

Toi-Yabe nodded.

"He's out there—the only hombre I ever hope to kill I wouldn't cover up from the buzzards!" he added. "But now I'll get yuh a drink. I want yuh to take it easy. The kid here an' me plan to move my camp over thisaway so we can take care of yuh right. Is that O. K.?"

The trip over and back, and then the ensuing days of Bellinger's early convalescence, were strange days indeed in the career of Toi-Yabe Tolman. Shamelessly from the first he made a partner of the five-year-old, though realizing the idolatry of Stone which occupied nine-tenths of the lad's heart. Little by little Toi-Yabe learned the whole pathetic story of the kilts and the home-made chaparejos.

Once when alone he clenched a fist and shook it at the back of the sheriff, who now was sitting up.

"Damn yuh!" muttered Toi-Yabe. "I'd take pleasure in belting yuh a couple, myself, if yuh was well! A father—huh!"

But then, while Dickie had the parent he worshipped all to himself and signs of a different attitude were plain in the expression of Bellinger, Toi-Yabe occupied himself mysteriously. He pretended to be prospecting a far canyon branching from this valley. Actually, with some of his own clothes and one of Bellinger's worn bearskin chaps, he was making strange upward and downward passes with a coarse needle.

Then came a day when he called the boy and made him don a certain costume—complete, in imitation of his daddy's, even to the belts and holsters—the latter cut down from those of Maddox. Then he made the impatient Dickie await call, while he squatted down beside the sheriff. Then and there the latter heard the entire story of the boy he had shunned.

"Come here, Dickie!" concluded Toi-Yabe, rising unexpectedly.

With a glad, excited shout Dickie, asmile from ear to ear, dashed out proudly, stopped, threw out his chest, and slapped his hands to the empty holsters.

"I got pants—an' real, honest-to-time chaps!" he cried joyfully.

"That-thar's yore son," remarked Toi-Yabe dryly, avoiding looking at Stone Bellinger, down whose rugged cheeks tears now coursed frankly. "If 'twas me, I'd say yuh didn't deserve him!"

And with that he turned on his heel, just seeing the lad run to his father, and went to where the laden burros and pony were waiting.

"C'mon, Cochise," he bade quietly. "'S time we was mooching along. I reckon, though, somehow, it's goin' to be damn' lonesome in the next valley."

A BRIDE TOO MANY

By ALANSON SKINNER

Author of "The American Indian," "Winking Bear Goes to War," etc.

A man should stick to one woman—especially if that woman is extremely jealous and has a temper of her own—yes, and more especially if prospective spouse number two is as ugly as Roaming Chief's old widow; so very properly Bright Horns took precautions to avoid further matrimonial entanglement.

"YOU know, partner," remarked Bright Horns, my Sauk Indian friend, "I had to leave our camp on the Deep Fork in a hurry, because the widow of the old Pawnee, Roaming Chief, showed up looking for one of our people who had got her to release him, when he was a prisoner in her village, by promising to elope with her. Well, as I told you, that Indian was me. As a matter of fact, though, Winking Bear, the name of my no-account cousin, was the name that I had given her, and, as it had been too dark for her to see my face, it looked as though my cousin was going to have a hard time to get out of it. I had the news from a young relative in time to pack up and get out of camp, because I did not wish to do anything that might interfere with Winking Bear and his arrangements.

"Well, that old Pawnee woman was something to have bad dreams about! Wah, her face was warty; she had a long red nose, and she was as skinny as a lean jack-rabbit! And fight! Say, partner, I once saw her drive old Roaming Chief all over the prairie, beating him with the flat of a war-club. So, when I left the Yellow Earth village for the Creek country, my medicine told me to keep right on going, and I never stopped until I got clean over to the Spavinaw Hills, in the Cherokee nation!

"Not at all did that old horned toad show up at the Deep Fork alone. She fetched them all along, her relations. There were about twenty-five Pawnee warriors, with presents and horses, and they evidently meant to have a big time at the old lady's wedding to Winking Bear. Now Keokuk, who was our chief at the time, was very friendly toward the Pawnee, and old lady Roaming Chief was a pretty important person among the Skidi band. So, when the word came that she was there, Keokuk called in all his Braves, and they turned out, with their best deerskin clothes and feathers on and their heads newly shaved and painted, and with their war-spears and clubs.

"Wah, from what they told me afterward, they made a fine show. And they came and escorted the old skeleton into the camp. Keokuk feasted them all, and, afterward, when the dancing was over and a whole lot of presents had been given back and forth, she told Keokuk just what she had come there for. Of course, Keokuk was pleased, and he sent half a dozen Braves over to Winking Bear's lodge, where he was eating with his Menomini wife at the time. Winking Bear couldn't figure out just what the chief wanted him for, but he thought in his heart, since the Pawnee were in camp, that it must have something to do with the horses that he and I had stolen from them a couple of moons before, when I was captured in Roaming Chief's lodge. But there wasn't any way to escape, so he had to go.

"When he got over there and went into Keokuk's big bark house, he saw the big crowd of Pawnee all gathered together and that homely old widow who was the main one, sitting beside Keokuk in the guest place, at the back of the lodge, smoking a long pipe like a man. She was so hard to look at that my cousin felt his stomach completely turn over.

" 'Hau, Pawnee woman, here is your bridegroom!' the chief spoke.

"Really, it is in my heart almost to be sorry for Winking Bear when I think of it! That old fence lizard jumped up from her place, and before poor Winking Bear could even draw breath, she threw her arms around him and gave him a kiss, a wet kiss, right on his mouth, and her whiskers scratched him like so many quills from a porcupine!

"'*Hagwai!*" yelled my miserable cousin. 'Hold on! Never before have I seen this woman!'

"'Be not so bashful, boy,' she answered, in pretty good Sauk, too. 'I am your own Little Fawn whom you eloped with from the Skidi camp, and who would have been your bride two moons past if it had not been that I fell from our horse when the warriors were pursuing us. And now I have come to claim you!'

"At once it became clear to Winking Bear that it must have been me, Bright Horns, who had stolen the woman. No, I had never thought that it was necessary to tell him what had happened to me after he had betrayed and abandoned me that night, but just then not at all was it difficult for him to finish the picture. And also, alas, he began to worry about what his first wife, that Menomini woman whom he cheated me out of, would have to say about it. Of course, with the Indian people, not at all are we limited to one wife by custom. Oh, no! But then, again, it is not wise to cross the will of a determined woman, and Winking Bear was rather of the belief, in his heart, that his wife would not like it, even though this old widow Roaming Chief was so homely that a buzzard would never have lit on her carcass!

"'Now of a truth, and the Sun hears me say it, you have made a mistake!' Winking Bear protested. 'Never indeed was I the man who eloped with you. The Earth, our mother, is witness that I never set eyes on you before this moment, Pawnee woman. May the Thunderbirds destroy me with lightning if I speak not straight! But then, oh Keokuk, my chief, and you, too, Pawnee woman, my cousin, Bright Horns, that snake, that dog, that crooked speaker! Of a sooth I know that he was on a raid to the Skidi settlement. He is the man! No doubt at all but he made love to this beautiful maiden and deceived her and gave her my name! Let him be brought here and give an account of himself!'

"The old Pawnee hag was about to protest, but Keokuk signed to his Braves.

"'Fetch him here, Bright Horns,' he ordered.

"But they could not find me in the camp, partner. By that time I was about three miles south of Kelleyville, and traveling fast. Winking Bear managed to get to his wife, and he told her, explaining that it was a trick played on him by me, his cousin. I don't know what that Menomini woman really thought, but, when she saw the Pawnee widow, by words, at least, she agreed with him. She it was that hunted around camp and found that worthless young man that brought me the news of the Pawnee coming. I had paid him most handsomely to go back home and say nothing, but, as soon as I was out of sight, he had sneaked in again.

"'Why, to the Spavinaw Hills I heard him say he was going, over beyond the Creek country,' this worthless one told her. 'And not at all will he return, did he say, until a vision which he had is fulfilled. A one-eyed Creek half-breed was to give him a spotted pony before he would pack up and come homeward, were the words that he said to his wife.'

"When they found that out, very sure was Winking Bear in his heart that I was the one who had made him the trouble. He hustled around, and at last he got hold of a poor miserable old spotted pony, blind in one eye, and almost too toothless to eat. The next thing to do was to locate a Creek half-breed with one eye, but my cousin, Winking Bear, having some Creek blood, that, too, with the help of his relatives, was he able to accomplish. They found a Creek mulatto who had had one eye put out with a razor by a Black-meat (Negro) and they hired him to chase up to the Spavinaw Hills and give me the horse, telling me that he was instructed to do so in a dream.

WELL, partner, not any such vision that I would have to stay up there until I was given a calico pony by a Creek half-breed with one eye did I have, as a matter of course. That was just an excuse to satisfy my woman, the sister of Winking Bear, so that she would pack up and go away from there with me. But, wah! When that half-breed appeared with the horse, she wanted right away to go back, and me, well, I began to think there was something medicine about it in my own heart. Never at all did I suspect it was a trap until I got right back to Deep Fork and Keokuk sent his Braves to pounce on me and fetch me into his wigwam to face the Pawnee woman.

"Of course, there was my cousin Winking Bear, with his face as blank as a smooth stone but laughing in his heart at me and the easy way that he was getting out of his trouble. The Pawnee old witch seemed to recognize me also. She hugged me and kissed me and began to get out a lot of presents for me and for Keokuk. Hey! Alas! Pretty bad is the way that it began to look for me. And my woman, she was right there, too, in the lodge and looking on. Not at all did I like the way that her eyes blazed at me.

"'Oh, Keokuk, great Chief of the Yellow Earths!' I shouted, for the old man was a bit deaf. 'Why am I, who am but a young man and as yet have never done anything worthy of mention, selected to receive this honor?'

"The old man grinned.

"'Why, to be sure as a matter of course, this is your Beautiful Little Fawn Woman, with whom you eloped from the Pawnee village of Skidi,' he answered. 'She fell from your horse in the pursuit set up by her husband, and he recaptured her, but now he is dead, and she is seeking her bridegroom. Be happy; tonight we will have a big feast, and I will give you each five horses, for I am glad to see our people allied with the powerful Pawnee!'

"Partner, about this time I felt like a man who has had a skinful of firewater the night before and is only just beginning to come back to his senses. Huh! Very sick was the way that I felt inside from the appearance of that old Pawnee horned toad. And, again, even if she had been as beautiful as an antelope, my wife is a very jealous woman! I began to call on my medicine and play for a little time.

"'Alas, O Chief, I regret that I cannot accept your horses!' I spoke up. 'Not very well known is it about our nation, but, when I was born, at the very same time, I say, did my mother give birth to a twin brother with me. Exactly like me is the way that they say he looks, though I have never seen him. Alas, at no more than the age of three was he stolen away by the Comanche! But I have reason to believe that he is still alive, since many times since have I been blamed for the scrapes that he gets into!'

"Old Keokuk looked long and hard at me and sat there smoking. As for the Pawnee woman, she paid no attention but kept on unpacking her presents. Apparently she was well content with the man that was brought her. Winking Bear had escaped, but not at all did she mean to let me get out of her clutches. As for our chief, hm, well, very likely he did not believe that straight was the way that I was

talking. And yet, maybe in his heart there was after all a little pity for me, for am I not Bright Horns, a man of the Buffalo clan, who has done much to build up the honor of our people? Something like this it was in my heart to remind him of, when he spoke to me.

"'It is good, Bright Horns, my son. You say that your twin brother still lives in the Comanche country? Very well, just now a white buffalo hunter has come into our camp. I will send for him and see if he can give us word of your brother! If your brother exists, then no doubt he is really the man. If not, tonight we will celebrate the marriage ceremony between you and this Pawnee woman.'

"So the old chief sent out for a messenger, and while we were waiting I tried to look at my wife out of the corner of one eye, but she was gone from the wigwam. Then I got the attention of Straight Horns, a man of my clan, who was a Brave and served Keokuk.

"'Five horses, if you will stand away from the door and let me run for it,' I offered. 'Six if you manage to block the way and give me a good start!'

"But Straight Horns was of the opinion that once I had cheated him in the matter of a swapping of horses, and he pretended he could not see me. Besides, Winking Bear, that ill-smelling sore-eyed coyote, held up seven fingers, meaning that was the number of ponies that he was willing to give to have me held there. Eh, wah, that was the worst fix that I have ever been caught in, and once the Osage found me taking a swim naked in an old spring-hole, without any weapons!

"Every time I studied that old Pawnee woman the bottom seemed to fall out of my stomach, and every time I thought of what my wife would say I really desired to be back in the spring-hole surrounded by the Osage and listening to their laughter.

PRETTY soon I heard the sound of many footsteps, and a lot of our nation came into the wigwam, and with them the white buffalo hunter. When I saw who it was, my heart started beating once more a little. Behold, it was Pope Filbert, for that is the way that they name him, and once, in a very tight place I had managed to get him out of it. Yes, he and his woman were hard up because Cherokee Bill and his outlaws had run off all their stock, but I got them all back for them and kept them from starving,

"Five horses, if you will let me run for it," I offered.

they and their little children. Am I not called Bright Horns? That was the obligation I had him under. A few words of the Long Knife tongue I am able to master.

"'My fiend, tellum yes you don' know me!' I whispered. 'Help me, my fiend!'

"That white man, he never made out to hear me! He just walks in, and stands there.

"'Do you know him, this man?' Keokuk asks him in the sign language.

"Pope Filbert he shut one eye, and studied me long time very hard.

"'No, can't say I do, Keokuk,' he signs back. 'But I've seen a man just like him!'

"Where?" signed Keokuk.

"Why, over in the Comanche country.'

"'Can you fetch him here?'

"'No.'

"'Why not?'

"'He is dead. Only last week I helped bury him. He and some friends stole a bunch of Cheyenne horses. The Cheyenne chased them and caught them and put out their fires.'

"Well, right now Keokuk and the Braves, and even the old Pawnee woman, began to believe that I had been talking straight. Almost did Winking Bear commence to believe it, and, partner, I was so surprised to hear the white man back up my whole story that I began to think that I must have had a twin brother myself! That old Pawnee horned toad began to weep and wail and tear her hair. The guards let me go, and I heard her calling to the men of her party to pack up, because she was going right over where her lover was buried and make a sacrifice at his grave. Yes, the white man said that for two horses and four buffalo robes he would guide her right to it. I went back to my lodge to get my best buffalo horse.

"'Really, to my mysterious brother's grave I ought to be likewise making a pilgrimage,' I thought in my heart.

"Besides, I also considered that it was better to put off explaining to my woman about it until she had cooled off a little.

"But, when I got to the place where my wigwam had stood, there was nothing there but the poles. The ponies were all gone, my buffalo horse, and all the others. There was a boy loafing around, a boy of the Thunder clan, and he spoke to me.

"'Oh, yes, Bright Horns, your woman has gone up to Yuchi Creek to visit her mother,' he told me. 'The ponies and all the household utensils she has taken with her. Only your buffalo horse and about three other ponies, I saw her give them to that white fellow just before Keokuk sent for him. For a long time she was talking with him.'

"'Huh! So that is the way of it. In what manner of a way was my woman apparently feeling when she departed?' I asked him.

"'Well, as a matter of fact, very red in the face was your woman. Hardly even pleasantly did she talk, even to me!'

"When I had studied this over, I decided that I would go and borrow a pony of Winking Bear. Surely, I thought in my heart, even my vagabond cousin will not refuse me, especially when it was through him that I find myself in this extremity.

BUT, when I got to where Winking Bear's wigwam was standing in the morning, exactly in the same condition as mine did I find it. Poles only. And there was Winking Bear, all alone, sitting with his blanket pulled up over his head as though his heart was bad. I went up to him.

"'Hau, Cousin,' I said to him. But he answered me nothing. 'I say, Wink-

ing Bear, where is your wigwam, and where is your woman?'

" 'Huh, well, as a matter of fact, she does not believe the truth about that Pawnee widow. Not at all have I been able to convince her that I am innocent. And so she has departed for her friends up at the Yuchi Creek and taken everything with her!'

"And so I sat down beside Winking Bear, in hopes that between us we could think up some way of doing something to get presents and square it up again with our women. Which of course, in the long run, we were able to do, although it was not easy. Of that I shall tell you some day.

"Oh, yes, the Pawnee woman and her party? Well, as a matter of fact, that Pope Filbert took them right out into the country between the Comanche and the Cheyenne holdings. He steered them for a big bottom along the south fork of the Canadian full of cottonwoods, and then he left them. Well, as a matter of fact, they pushed on, but when they got there, not at all did they find the body of my twin brother wrapped up in a blanket and stuck in the fork of a tree. No, right into a big camp of Cheyenne and Arapaho did they blunder.

"Huh, wah! Those Cheyenne ran the Pawnee clean back to Skidi without letting them take time to stop for breathing, it is said, and then the Pawnee came out of their village and ran the Cheyenne right back again. Pope Filbert says that they caught the Cheyenne chief and were going to put him to torture, because he was a bad Indian who had slain plenty of Pawnee, but they let him off on condition that he marry the old horned toad woman, the wife of Roaming Chief. Maybe they did; I don't know, but me—hagwai!—I would take the torture, for, partner, it wouldn't last so long, and, think you, how would it be to spend the rest of a long life looking at that Pawnee woman?"

FREE GRASS RUINED THE OPEN RANGE

By ESTEN REDMAN

THOUGH pioneers reported that grass in the West was "boundless" and "inexhaustible," it is the sad truth that the open range was exhausted in only thirty-five years after the beginning of the great cattle drives from Texas. By 1898 practically no part of the West was unstocked; indeed, the land was so seriously overstocked with cattle that the native range grasses disappeared and the range itself was nearly ruined.

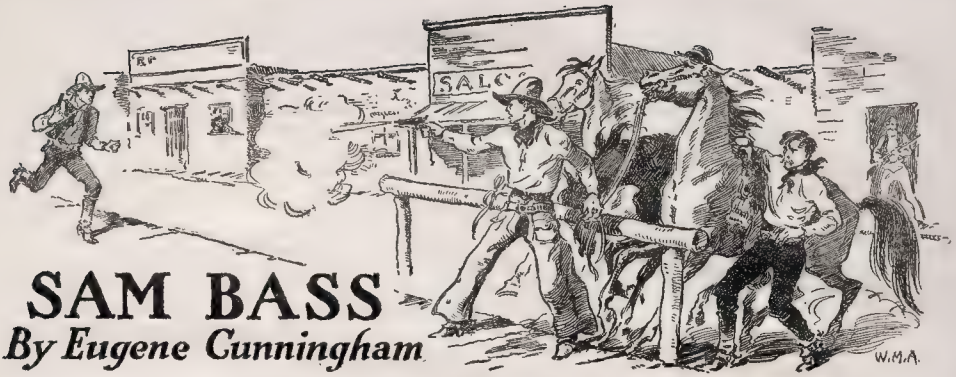
It seems incredible—and was unbelievable to the first settlers—that range which could support millions of buffalo would be ruined by longhorns. The first white men crossed the plains through grass from one to three feet in height, and so thick that a thousand cows, and five thousand sheep, and a cavvy of five hundred horses grazed across it without leaving a track plain enough for a rear guard to follow. This was in 1540, and the fact is attested by the "Relation" of the Spaniard Castenada, who accompanied Coronado's army.

As late as 1858 Alexander Majors, of the famous frontier freighting firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, wrote that he had wintered fifteen thousand work oxen on the open plains without providing hay, grain, or shelter of any kind. Not only had the cattle come through the winter in good condition, but feed was so plentiful that many had fattened enough to be fit for beef. About 1867, just before the stocking of the ranges began in earnest, the range in certain Texas counties would support three hundred cows to the square mile, or one to each two acres. On the same land fifteen years later a cow needed five acres, and by 1898 ten acres was the average. Overgrazing had reduced the productiveness of the range to one-fifth its original value.

For this depreciation, however, it would be unjust to blame the early settlers. The grass was free to everyone. If a ranchman did not put as many cows on his land as it would possibly support someone else would drive in a herd or a flock of sheep that would eat the grass down to the roots. The small amount of land it was legal to homestead was not extensive enough to raise cattle profitably, and if public lands were seized and fenced illegally a range war was liable to develop between the squatter and neighboring owners who claimed—truly enough—that they had as much right to the land as he.

The buffalo herds were constantly on the move, grazing from north to south with the seasons. Though they might eat off the grass on a given territory they would then move on; and the forage would have months in which to get its growth, seed, and cure for winter feed. In the effort to increase the value of range lands, the Forest Service today is advocating a return to the method of the buffaloes. In the spring, for example, the herds will be moved into the desert to eat the filaree grass, which lasts for only two months, beginning about the middle of February. They will then be driven into the mountains for summer range, and for the next six months there will be no cows in the desert. Forage will grow undisturbed until November, when the herds return to their "winter range."

However, even today on the public domain there is nothing to prevent an owner from using the desert in summer, though one cow grazing then will eat grass that might have grown into forage enough to support several cows through the winter. What is free to the individual is ruinously expensive to the cattle industry as a whole—and on ranges once considered excellent it requires today forty acres to feed a single cow the year round.



SAM BASS

By Eugene Cunningham

Author of "Beginnings of Great Cities," "The Luck of Lombardy Bart," etc.

A second Robin Hood was the romantic Sam Bass to the cowboys of Texas—but quite another matter was he to the railroad companies and the peace officers for whom he and his gang made life miserable.

THE trace wound through the rolling wooded prairies of "the Nation," where clearings were carpeted with rustling dead leaves and dry grass. The light spring wagon bounced over ruts, though the team was wearied by a long day in harness and the wagon's pace was slow. The driver was a cowboy—just a lean brown cowboy with nothing to set him apart particularly from any of a thousand others in this year of '77, when Texas trail herds were moving north and ever north in the great hegira that was to stock ranges from the Nation to the Selkirks with Texas longhorns.

The black-haired man on the seat beside the driver was shorter—five full inches below six feet—and powerfully muscled of shoulder. Twenty-six years old, he was, with a face that might have belonged to a boy for all the brown mustache at which he now tugged thoughtfully, as restless dark eyes looked around in half a dozen ways at once.

Suddenly the driver, who had been moving restlessly on the box-seat, jerked in the travel-worn horses so that they fairly sat down upon their haunches.

"I been a-smellin' smoke for five minutes!" he muttered. "I wonder now if——"

One lean brown hand, the left, gripped the lines. The right had curled about the sinister black butt of a long-barreled Frontier Colt.

"I smell it, too!" nodded his companion tensely. "Hell! I see it. Yonder!"

A light film, that was barely detectable against the treetops a hundred yards ahead, showed faintly gray.

"An' that damn' axle a-squeakin' like a dyin' shote!" snarled the driver. "Reckon they heard us?"

He was furious-faced, glaring at the lacy smoke-film as at sign of an enemy. But the dark, stocky man was on the ground with a snaky wriggle, and he took with him the .44 Winchester carbine that had been hanging in its scabbard from the wagon-seat. He vanished into the bushes, and with an oath the driver flipped the lines in loops about the brake-handle and leaped down to follow.

He was not so good a woodsman as the other, so his progress, to be noiseless, must be slower. He met the dark-haired man coming back grinning. There was something tight-lipped, rather grim, about that smile which showed large, white teeth.

"Soldiers!" he whispered. "They've already heard us. We just got to go on and trust to luck. They're sneakin' into the brush right now to look us up."

They went back to the wagon quickly, mounted to the seat again and drove on. Fifty, seventy-five yards forward; then from the brush on each side of the trace burst blue-clad men, afoot. A smart, boyish lieutenant stepped up to the front wheel.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

The driver looked sidelong at his companion, who grinned down at the officer.

"Why," he drawled, "we're a couple o' cowboys a-goin' home to Santone. Our names wouldn't mean nothin', I reckon. Been—" vaguely he waved his arm to indicate the vast spaces behind him—"up north with a trail herd. Charlie Howell's trail herd."

Cavalrymen had edged closer to the wagon by this time, glancing in curiously at the jumble of bedding and clothes-bags. The black-haired man who had done the explaining to the lieutenant gave them no heed; still he grinned down, quite frankly and friendly, upon the officer.

"If you don't mind, Cap'n," he said, "we'd like to camp along with you-all tonight. By gosh! Wish we could make a trade with you to ride with us till we get clean out o' the Nation!" He laughed infectiously. "Two nights back, me'n Bill, here, we camped with a bunch we overtook. We never got what you might call a good night's sleep. I seen wild-lookin' fellows, but the tall one a-leadin' that gang he took the prize. We was sure glad to get away next mornin' an' I don't mind sayin' we sort o' figgered so's one o' us was always facin' their way."

"The Nation isn't much of a health-resort," nodded the lieutenant, smiling in his turn. "Well, come along. We'll see that you have a good night's sleep tonight, anyway."

The wagon moved on, with the cavalrymen accompanying, into a wide clearing where the twenty-odd soldiers of the detachment had bivouacked. After supper the two cowboys sought out the lieutenant, who alone had a tent. He was lonely, being the only officer with the detachment; also he had been thinking over the reference to a hard bunch somewhere to the north. The cowboys found him ready to talk.

"We're up here scouting around for some train-robbers who held up a U. P. train at Ogallala, Nebraska," he told them, as they sat smoking outside the tent. "There were six, altogether, in the gang. We heard that two were killed shortly after the robbery at a little place called Buffalo Stage up in Kansas."

"Hell! Them fellows'll never come down this way!" cried the taller cowboy, he who had driven the wagon, with much emphasis. "Not much!"

The dark-haired man shot a furious glance sidelong at the emphatic one.

"An' why not?" he snapped. "Don't ever' Tom, Dick an' Harry that's on the dodge head for the Nation? You think with them fancy boots o' yours, Bill! Reckon ol' Lengthy's gang, that was so free with hard looks for us, is a bunch o' Sunday school superintendents, mebbe? Could you get up in court an' swear that they wasn't this gang that stuck up that train?"

"Mebbe you're right, Frank," nodded the driver meekly.

"How many were in this gang you camped with?" Thus the lieutenant, leaning forward eagerly.

"Why, the tall fellow an' three ornery lookin' customers. That is, they hadn't had a wash or shave for a right smart while. Horses looked like they'd been hard rid——"

He was rolling a cigarette, the black-haired man. Now he looked up sideway at the lieutenant, as he put away Durham and papers, with the ready grin that showed his white teeth.

"Prob'ly didn't look no worse, at that," he smiled, "than me'n Bill here!"

The lieutenant laughed with him, then sobered abruptly.

"Well, I'm glad you fellows happened along," he remarked. "I think I'll have a look at your back-trail tomorrow and see if I can have a talk with Lengthy and his friends. Four, eh? By Jove! That would be the tally, now, if they killed two in Kansas!"

BEHIND the spring-wagon rolling south again with dawn, the cavalry camp had vanished. The troopers were in the saddle, heading north to investigate "Lengthy." The black-haired man turned on the box-seat and his white teeth showed; he shook with noiseless laughter.

"An' he's goin' to have a look at 'Lengthy!'" he exploded suddenly. "Oh, Lawdy! I sure wish him lots o' luck!"

"Well, he pitched a big scare into me, just the same!" nodded Jack Davis, sourly. "When he says he's a-lookin' for train-robbers, Sam, I could count the bars on the winder!"

"He never scared me half as much as you did!" grunted Sam Bass, irritably. "You blame' fool! You like to make him suspicious o' us!"

"Do you reckon they are a-lookin' for us?" Jack Davis was plainly uneasy at the thought. "Hell! Mebbe we better not figger on goin' to Denton, Sam! We got twenty thousand between us. Let's head for South America."

"No!" Sam Bass' square jaw was set and his mouth tight beneath the brown mustache. "No, sir! There's folks in Denton I want to show a few. They always said I'd never amount to nothin', a-runnin' around the country like I did, clean down to Dallas, to race the Denton Mare. I want to parade down the street a-throwin' twenty-dollar gold-pieces over the bars. We'll have a look, though, before we ride in."

Jack Davis, whose nerves were tense from uncertainty these days, and who shared none of Sam Bass' pleasure at nearing Denton, nodded gloomily.

"'S a good idee," he said. "But me, I wisht we was high-tailin' it for South America."

To which Sam replied with a glint of white teeth beneath his mustache, as they squatted on the edge of the bottoms, waiting for dusk and his trip to the house of a certain good friend.

If Sheriff Everhart and certain others of the oldsters in the community had looked askance at Sam and his wild ways, almost without exception the younger generation had been always on his side. As the owner of that little sorrel beauty, The Denton Mare, he had been known far and wide; known and liked immensely.

It was not, altogether, that he was a rider without peer; a dead shot with Winchester or Colt; leader in any daring enterprise of "the boys," a master cowboy. Nor was his popularity born wholly of generosity and a certain rough chivalry, though these qualities he had in large measure. Others have had the every characteristic of Sam Bass, yet have waked no such fierce loyalty as this stocky, dark-eyed cowboy knew; such admiration in Cowland, where he is a heroic figure even today.

From friends in Denton Sam learned that an Ogallala man, an ex-express messenger, had suspected the six cowboys of the train robbery, though the officials had not been suspicious of them as, in the days after the robbery, they mingled with sheriffs and marshals and railroad detectives in Ogallala. He had trailed the party southward, this ex-messenger, and spying upon their camp had heard them discuss the crime; had learned their plans, their real names; had even seen them handling bright new gold-pieces of the year 1877. His knowledge he had communicated to the officials. The law wanted Sam Bass and Jack Davis —wanted them hard.

So to Jack Davis, hiding in the elm-bottoms, Sam Bass took back the story of the search and the large reward offered for them. To the authenticated report of the death of Collins and Heffridge, two of their gang, he added the account of the killing of another, Jim Berry, in his home town, Mexico, Missouri, where Berry's shining new gold-pieces had connected him with the robbery.

"That leaves just three out o' the six," said Sam. "Seems Ol' Dad Underwood never went to Missoury with Jim Berry. Anyway, they never got him."

"I told you we'd better hit for South America!" complained Jack Davis, whose bump of discretion seems to have been well-developed. "'Tain't too late now. Let's high-tail it, Sam. We can't buck all this."

"Ah, what's to be scared of?" scoffed Sam, those large white teeth showing in his famous grin. "Don't I know this-here country like the palm o' my hand? Don't be losin' your nerve, Jack! We'll just stick here an' be damned to 'em to catch us."

But Jack Davis was beyond persuasion. He never had thought such a hornets' nest would be aroused by that U. P. robbery. While planning it, Collins had stressed the large chance of their never being recognized. To

be "on the dodge" in the face of such widespread and earnest search broke Davis' nerve. So from the elm-bottoms outside of Denton, Jack Davis rode hell-for-leather; rode out of the picture entirely. Whether he made South America, or started afresh under another name in the States there is no authentic report. But certain it is that neither he nor Old Dad Underwood ever paid the penalty, officially, for the crime.

SAM BASS, who had left Denton that spring a likable, bull-headed, but honest cowboy, came home a famous outlaw, fit to mention with Jesse James and the Youngers. Nor did he lack apologists. Texas had always held itself somewhat aloof from national affairs; what a man did elsewhere seldom worried the Texans, so long as he obeyed the code in their midst.

Now it was complained that Texan authorities were pulling Nebraska chestnuts from what might well be a hot fire; that Sam Bass was being persecuted in this state when he had committed no crime whatsoever against the sovereignty of Texas.

Meanwhile, moving through the well-known county with a surety, a prescience, almost, that baffled his pursuers, Sam Bass gained a following. Attracted by his reputation—perhaps by thought of that not-yet-spent ten thousand in shiny gold-pieces of '77—men appeared unobtrusively in the elm-bottoms.

So came Henry Underwood, with Arkansas Johnson, Sebe Barnes, Jim Murphy, young Frank Jackson, Pipes Herndon; later, two or three others not so well known joined the gang. Daring, dangerous men, some of these men with records as gun-fighters, as hard characters when "on the prod." But Sam Bass was their undisputed leader.

Not long could such a group be content to ride into the little hamlets of Denton and Dallas and Tarrant Counties, to "belly up to the bar" and amuse themselves with occupations so mild as the mere downing of Old Jordan and shooting at marks—in or out of the saloons—and talking of past doings. The logical thought came to Bass that he could be hunted no more than he was. He had committed no crime in Texas, yet Texan officers chased him. He had the name; it would cost him little or nothing to get the game.

The gang's first job was the robbery of a Texas and Pacific train at Eagle Ford, some seven miles west of Dallas. It was a simple job to stop the train near the sleepy little farming village and go through it. Thereafter, two or three similar robberies were executed with no features particularly interesting. Considering the numbers in Sam Bass' gang, the profit was small, averaging perhaps five hundred dollars per man in each robbery. It is not his train-robberies which give the interest to the career of Sam Bass upon which his tradition rests, but the masterly fashion in which for months he tied sheriffs' posses and Texas Rangers into knots.

John B. Jones was Adjutant-General of Texas during 1877-8 and so commanded the Texas Rangers. Jones was an able and experienced officer, and the train-robberies of Sam Bass, which were becoming very frequent, roused him to unusual energy. Having visited Denton, Dallas and the surrounding country personally, he organized a new company of thirty Rangers at Dallas, giving the command to Captain June Peak.

To this company was given the specific duty of capturing the Sam Bass Gang, but figuratively, if not actually, Sam mocked Captain Peak and his clumsy, inexperienced recruits. It is said that, counting Rangers and sheriffs' posses, at least a hundred men now took the trail of Texas' train-robber premier. Yet tradition has it, also, that during his time "on the dodge" Sam himself was rarely, if ever, driven out of the three adjoining counties of Denton, Dallas and Tarrant. The wooded nature of the country in this locality made it simple for him to elude the blundering officers.

It was a simple job to stop the train

Not always did the gang hold together, now. Bass' second-in-command, the daredevil Arkansas Johnson, was killed at Salt Creek in Wise County by Captain Peak's Rangers. Then Pipes Herndon and Jim Murphy were captured. Sam himself, with Sebe Barnes and young Frank Jackson, were the only members out of jail, and they hugged the elm-bottoms of Denton County. The handwriting on the wall became clear now. This dodging might go on almost indefinitely, but the nerve-racking strain was telling on them all; they were weary of it. Sam decided to leave his beloved north Texas and in Mexico or some other foreign country make a new start.

To General Jones, by this time, the intent to capture or kill Sam Bass had become an obsession. We may shrug away mention of stool pigeons and traitors as necessary units of police equipment, but by Texans generally, and especially by the cowboys, who regarded Sam Bass as one of themselves, the methods of General Jones were given no fancy names whatever.

Jim Murphy was the tool chosen by Jones. To Murphy, then in jail awaiting Federal trial for robbery of the mails, Jones went with the offer of freedom on condition that he execute a certain plan which would result in Sam Bass' betrayal into the officers' hands. Murphy, to give him the tiny modicum of credit one may, at first rejected the proposal, even though life imprisonment seemed its alternative. But Jones was persistent, and finally threats and promises together overcame Murphy's remembrance of Sam Bass' many kindnesses to the needy Murphy clan.

Jim Murphy was arrested and then released on bail.
He jumped his bond at Tyler and then took the train for Terrell.
But Major Jones had posted Jim and that was all a stall;
'Twas only a plan to capture Sam before the coming fall.

So runs a verse of the old ballad. With the clear, unquibbling judgment of the outdoors, it tells unmincingly the tale of Jones' plan to trap Sam Bass.

Murphy, having been released on bail supplied by certain men in Jones' confidence, jumped his bond and a

great hue-and-cry was raised. As had been planned, it preceded Jim Murphy to Denton, where he rejoined Sam Bass, Sebe Barnes and Frank Jackson. But friends of Bass and Barnes had written warning that this looked to be a snare; that the bondsmen were probably creatures of General Jones. Confronted with these letters, for his very life Murphy played his part in masterly fashion—without, however, convincing Sam and Barnes. The white-faced, protesting traitor read murder in their hard eyes and restless gun-hands.

Frank Jackson, barely twenty-two years old, had become with Arkansas Johnson's death, Sam's right-hand man. Now Frank took Murphy's part, declaring his belief in the traitor's good faith. But there were tense moments in the dusky elm-bottoms, with Sam and Sebe Barnes glaring murderously at the trembling Murphy, before Frank Jackson flung down his ultimatum: they must kill him before they killed Murphy.

It was decided to rob a bank and then strike out for Mexico. So, early in July, 1878, the four riders left Denton County forever, heading south. Just outside of Waco the four made camp and looked over the town. In a saloon frequented by cattlemen, so tradition has it, Sam Bass flung down a twenty-dollar gold-piece upon the bar, with a bitter sentence that sums up all the pros and cons of such a life as his, weighing all the tinsel glory against the myriad hardships of the outlaw's lot.

"There goes the last U. P. gold-piece," he grunted, watching moodily as it spun toward the bartender's waiting hand. "An' a lot o' good they done me!"

Sam decided that a job in Waco would be too dangerous to attempt, hence the quartet mounted their horses again and jogged on south, steadily nearing the state capital at Austin, where Jones sat waiting for word from his tool.

To Jones came a hastily scrawled note postmarked Belton, saying that Sam Bass moved toward Round Rock in Williamson County, there to rob the bank. Then ensued action upon the quiet capital grounds!

There was a Ranger company stationed at San Saba, under the veteran thief-taker, Lieutenant N. O. Reynolds. One of the headquarters detachment killed a horse getting to Reynolds, while Jones himself, having dispatched R. C. Ware and two other Rangers to Round Rock, followed the next morning.

Upon coming into Round Rock, Jones warned local officials that the Bass Gang was coming. In the Texas of that day these words were enough to insure feverish activity in any town, small or large. On no account, Jones insisted, were the town officers to attempt an arrest before the arrival of Reynolds and his Rangers.

FRIDAY, July 19, 1878. Reynolds' Company E, Frontier Battalion, Texas Rangers, had made the one hundred fifty miles from San Saba to old Round Rock at top speed and in early afternoon pitched camp outside of town. Sam Bass, with Barnes, Jackson and Murphy, were also camped upon the town's outskirts. The outlaws rode into town for a last check-up of the robbery's details. Murphy, sensing the final scene so soon to be played, upon some pretext dropped behind. So Bass and Barnes and young Frank Jackson came up to Coppel's store together. As they went inside they were noticed by the two local deputy sheriffs, Moore and Grimes.

They stared hard at the three dusty strangers, but apparently without thought that the trio were the famous outlaws they were awaiting, upon whose heads were placed rewards by states and railroads and express companies. When Sam Bass' broad shoulders had disappeared within the door Moore turned to Grimes.

"I think those fellows got guns on," he said.

"I think so, too," nodded Grimes. "I'm goin' in an' search 'em."

He went in, a hero and a martyr, in a way; but history as written by the cool and practical judgment of rangeland in fifty years makes him, also, and more so, pretty much "plain damned fool." For he took none of the mechanical precautions of the wary peace officer confronting strangers. As Grimes stepped inside, Moore trailed him to the door and stood blinking.

At Grimes' entrance the trio at the counter whirled instinctively. For a long instant deputy sheriff and outlaws eyed each other.

"I think you fellows got guns on," said Grimes, a trifle belligerently. "I'm goin' to search you," he added, in the dead silence that greeted his speech.

Something about the silent group must have struck a warning note within him. For now, gun hand going toward Colt butt, he began to back toward the door, where Moore still stood gaping at the play inside.

"Sure, we got guns!" snarled Sam Bass suddenly.

As if the phrase were a signal, his gun and Barnes' and Jackson's flashed out. There was a rolling roar, deafening in the confined space of Coppel's store, as three Colts flung heavy bullets into the luckless deputy. Grimes staggered under the triple impact, but continued to back out. Moore had leaped aside and Grimes reached the sidewalk, to crash forward upon his face. After him sprang the outlaws, sensing a trap, scenting disaster. Moore was shot through the lungs as he snatched belatedly at his Colt.

Ranger Dick Ware was sitting in the barber shop almost next door, waiting for a shave. The heavy three-in-one report from the store jerked him to his feet. Automatically his Colt came out and he stepped into the street, to come almost face to face with the outlaws, who stood staring down at the bodies upon the sidewalk.

An utterly fearless man, this Ranger Dick Ware, worthy exponent of all the heroic traditions of the service. Odds of three to one might well have sent a genuinely brave officer back indoors to fire from cover. But Ware ran toward them, his .45 flipping up. There was a hitching post on the sidewalk and bullets from Bass' gang knocked splinters from it that struck Ware in the face. But he came on, firing rapidly. A bullet struck Sam Bass' cartridge belt, broke two shells, and mushrooming, tore his right kidney to ribbons.

General Jones, at this moment coming up-street, heard the staccato rattle of the firing and came on the run as Bass and the others backed toward their horses. Jones had but a small-calibre double-action Colt, but he entered the duel blithely, joining Dick Ware. The other two Rangers who had come to Round Rock with Ware now ran up also, while from doorways up and down the street appeared armed citizens to open fire upon the trio by the horses.

Barnes was shot dead, Bass was mortally wounded. Only young Frank Jackson now stood erect, and, with bravery equal to Dick Ware's, he kept up the outlaws' end of the firing while with left hand he unhitched Sam Bass' horse. Bullets fairly rained around him from all directions as he helped

Bass into the saddle, then sprang upon his own animal.

Out through Old Round Rock galloped the two frightened horses, Bass reeling in the saddle, Frank Jackson holding him up. Jim Murphy, the traitor, pale, shaken, stricken by we know not what torture of remorse, or, perhaps, none at all, saw the two escaping.

For the rest of that day Bass and Jackson vanished from sight. Posses and Ranger detachments scoured the vicinity, but not until Saturday morning did Rangers find Sam Bass, alone, near death, lying beneath a large oak. He admitted his identity and made no resistance.

Jackson had insisted upon remaining with his dying leader, but Bass—game, unselfish to the last, the cowboys' ideal now as he had been in brighter days—was equally insistent that Frank save himself. So, having made Bass as comfortable as possible, unwillingly Jackson escaped.

Taken into Round Rock, Bass received the best attention local medicos could administer. But he died on Sunday, July 21st, his twenty-seventh birthday, steadfastly refusing to give the names of associates or friends. Upon the tombstone set to mark his grave was carved the inscription:

SAMUEL BASS
Born July 21st, 1851
Died July 21st, 1878
A brave man reposes in death here.
Why was he not true?

Frank Jackson, after Sam Bass' death, asked only for an opportunity to meet the traitor, Jim Murphy. But the latter evaded him and finally committed suicide. So the famous Bass Gang was finally broken up, but the memory of Sam and Frank Jackson, of Sebe Barnes and Arkansas, and of the traitor Murphy, is green today in Texas.

A few years ago, the writer was returning to Texas from New York, in company with a San Angelo cowboy. We unloaded the Mercer roadster on the Mallory dock at Galveston and started for El Paso. Coming into a land of wide prairies near Menard, vast and bleak under the pitiless December wind, we encountered three lean riders in two gallon Stetsons and Fort Worth boots and stopped to pass the time of day, the Durham and the quart. When we had gossiped a while of range affairs and with benumbed fingers wrapped tobacco in those huge, thick brown papers colloquially known in Cattle Land as "saddle blankets," we said "so long" to the cowboys and they jogged on.

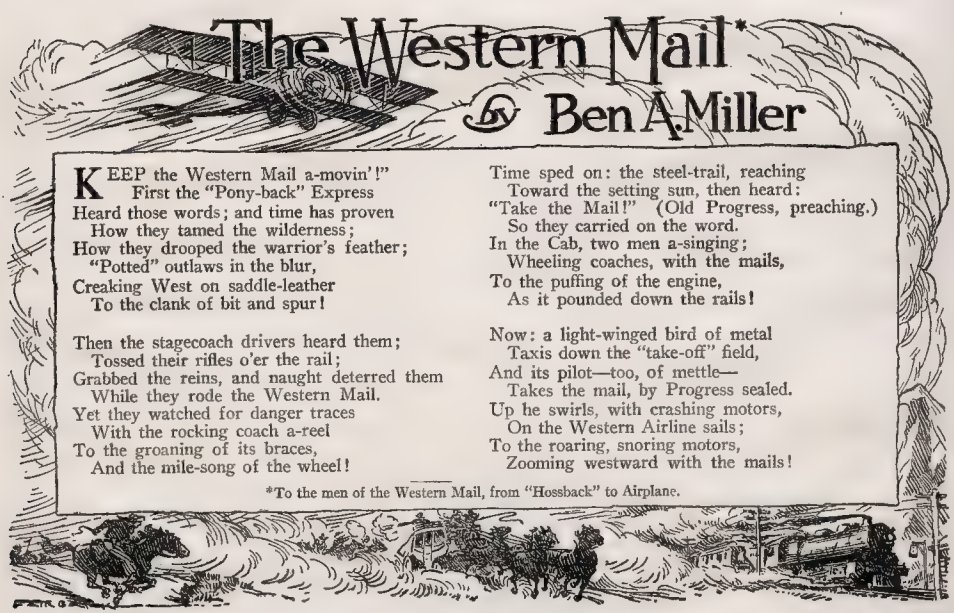
The tall puncher in the checked mackinaw began to sing in a high, dolorous tenor, swaying to his pony's running-walk:

"Sam Bass was born in Indiana, it was his native home;
And at the age of seventeen, young Sam began to roam.
He first came down to Texas, a cowboy for to be,
A kinder hearted fellow, you seldom ever see!"

Beside me, mechanically Morg took up the old ballad that every Texan knows, that I had not heard for years; sang it to the last verse, which deals with Jim Murphy's treachery:

"And so he sold out Sam and Barnes and left their friends to mourn.
Oh, what a scorching Jim will get when Gabriel blows his horn!
Perhaps he's got to heaven; there's none of us can say;
But if I am right in my surmise, he's gone the other way!"

"He was a great guy, Sam," opined Morg, Twentieth Century cowpuncher. "Hadn't been for that blanked illegitimate, Murphy, he wouldn't have been caught, either!"



KEEP the Western Mail a-movin'!"
First the "Pony-back" Express
Heard those words; and time has proven
How they tamed the wilderness;
How they drooped the warrior's feather;
"Potted" outlaws in the blur,
Creaking West on saddle-leather
To the clank of bit and spur!

Then the stagecoach drivers heard them;
Tossed their rifles o'er the rail;
Grabbed the reins, and naught deterred them
While they rode the Western Mail.
Yet they watched for danger traces
With the rocking coach a-reel
To the groaning of its braces,
And the mile-song of the wheel!

Time sped on: the steel-trail, reaching
Toward the setting sun, then heard:
"Take the Mail!" (Old Progress, preaching.)
So they carried on the word.
In the Cab, two men a-singing;
Wheeling coaches, with the mails,
To the puffing of the engine,
As it pounded down the rails!

Now: a light-winged bird of metal
Taxis down the "take-off" field,
And its pilot—too, of mettle—
Takes the mail, by Progress sealed.
Up he swirls, with crashing motors,
On the Western Airline sails;
To the roaring, snoring motors,
Zooming westward with the mails!

*To the men of the Western Mail, from "Hossback" to Airplane.

YELLOW IRON

By ROBERT V. CARR

Author of "Seven Gay Riders"

A good gun and a loyal partner—these are the white man's "medicine," as the Sioux learned when Don Aletes came to the Spirit Hills of Dakota in search of adventure and the precious yellow iron

True to a hair I made you,
Barrel and sight and lock;
In beauty I arrayed you,
Hammer and guard and stock.
Go to the Western border,
Work of my mind and hand;
There you shall give the order,
There you shall take the land.
—*Song of the Gunsmith.*

HIS uncle, a gunsmith and an old frontiersman, had been largely responsible for rousing the atavistic urge that had lifted Don Aletes from the humdrum surroundings of a small town, and sent him toward the setting sun, until from that ribbon of dust, the Oregon trail, he sighted the peaks of the mysterious Black Hills.

After years of wandering in the West, the boy's uncle had returned to the sleepy little Ohio town, to find his nephew an orphan. The old frontiersman was a practical man. He opened a gun shop and made Don his apprentice. While they fashioned deadly but beautiful weapons, for the Aletes guns soon became famous for their beauty, balance and accuracy, the frontiersman told the lad of the wild West, in the forties, of the buffalo roaming the plains in countless numbers, of the rushing rivers and vast canyons, and of the gold he had located in the mountains.

Softly the years slipped by, and presently the old frontiersman worked no more in his little gun shop. He sat on the porch of the house, where he and Don kept bachelor quarters, and dreamed of the prairies and mountains of the West. Then, to speed the dull hours, in the spring of 1852 he fell to planning a return to the trail. He knew that he would never see the buffalo again, but it pleased his fancy to pretend that he was preparing for the journey. Don, now a silent, meditative youth, going quietly to and from the gun shop, listened with rapt attention to the old man's plans, the wanderlust stirring within him.

"First thing, Don, is a brace of double-barreled rifles."

The youth nodded gravely, for to him his uncle was the font of all wisdom.

"Yes, that's it," chuckled the old man. "A brace of double-barreled rifles. That will be a surprise for the Indians. We may run against a war party. They will come on after our first shots, to get into us before we have time to reload. The second barrel will surprise them. They will fall back, because to them our medicine will be strong medicine. Don't forget, Don, a brace of double-barreled rifles. You can turn them out, but I'll show you the fine points. And pistols, too. The new six-shooters—a great invention. But we can buy them cheaper than we can make them.

"And I have been thinking of combining powder and ball some way, so that a man would not have to take so much time to reload. There were times, in the West, when my life hung on a hair, and the seconds required to reload were all against me. I have been turning it over in my mind. A man could put the powder and ball in a paper jacket. He could seal in a stick or a bit of string to break the paper and let the powder into the barrel. Then he could ram down paper and ball. One move and he could get powder and ball and wadding. Another move for his cap, after he had rammed the charge home, and he would be ready.

"We'll start out in a covered wagon. We'll drive mules, and lead saddle horses. We'll trim right down to necessities, but take along a little grain for saddle horses. Every night we'll rub down the saddle horses. A horse means a lot to a man in the West, Don. Get there with your horse in good condition.

"And we'll go to the Spirit Hills in the Dakota country. I was through that country once. You have seen the nuggets I washed out. You have seen the map I made. In the bars of the stream I named Pactolus there are plenty more nuggets like those I found. The stream disappears—runs under a canyon wall.

"We had to skip on account of the Sioux, but that is a chance every man has to take when he enters that country. But if he keeps his wits about him, he is not likely to be surprised. Still, it's mostly chance.

"And tobacco. Plenty of tobacco, if nothing else.

"Nothing but material that will stand service. We'll get the best, Don. The West is no place for shoddy material or shoddy men. There are shoddy men out there, but the Indians, or somebody, kill them sooner or later. The West weeds out the white weaklings, but there are a lot of white men out there who can make the Indian look a saint by comparison. But you'll get along with them, because you're calm and have no fear. You don't talk much, and that will help you.

"I talk too much. Well, my boy, that is an old man's privilege. And now bring me my pipe, and my shawl, too. The sun is shining, but somehow it seems chilly—chilly to me."

BUT death will not wait for the consummation of human plans. One night the old frontiersman's heart stopped beating, and he sank into the sleep from which none awaken.

After the funeral, the youth concentrated on the plans his uncle had made for seeking the gold in the Spirit Hills. He had no attachments, and though he attracted many a warm and admiring glance from the maidens of the village, his heart was as yet untouched by the softer emotions.

His uncle had left him some money, more than enough to pay the expenses of the venture. After making a double-barreled rifle, a beautiful weapon which he wished his uncle could see, he sold the gun shop and the house.

When all that he owned was turned into cash, he sought the little graveyard where he had erected a simple slab in memory of the kindly soul whom he had deeply loved in his calm, undemonstrative way.

Gently he patted the tombstone.

"Well, good-by," he said softly, and turned away.

He was soon in St. Louis where he assembled his outfit, following closely his uncle's plan. He joined a wagon train, but made no close friends and told no man of his destination. At Fort Laramie he fell out of the long procession, gave his wagon and harness into the keeping of the half-breed traders, secured a supply of dried buffalo meat, packed his mules and with only a casual farewell to the loungers near the gate of the stockade, headed toward the Spirit Hills.

Now, without mishap or the faintest sign of danger, he had penetrated into the heart of the mysterious mountains.

Quietly enjoying the pristine beauties unfolding before his eyes, he rode slowly into a great park that lay like a vast green robe spread carelessly between the black, forbidding walls of the forest.

He lounged back in his roomy, flat-horned saddle, rested his double-barreled muzzle-loader across his thighs, and considered the work before him. He would make his camp beyond the stream, convenient to both wood and water. He would erect a rude shelter, possibly a lean-to against that white rock, upthrust at the forest's edge, a mighty monolith glittering against a dark background of pines. It would be easy, too, to construct a fireplace of rock and mud, sheltering it against sudden showers. He would get up a supply of dry wood. He would live comfortably, while he searched for the stream his uncle had named Pactolus. He had enough provisions to last him through the summer. There would be weeks when, except for salt, he would not have to touch his reserves. The country was thronging with game, and there would be plenty of wild fruit, strawberries, Juneberries, choke-cherries and raspberries.

What a home could be built up in this opening! He visioned a log house built against the great white rock. The rock would serve for the back of a fireplace.

In the rich, black soil, potatoes and cabbages and oats would flourish. Why, a man could have a home here that would make a king envy him.

Plenty of good grass for, say, fifteen or twenty cows. One, Old Spot, perhaps, would wear a bell.

Reluctantly he returned to reality. His dream had been a very pleasant one. But it was only a dream—a dream that might never come true, and all at once the silence, seemingly intensified by all the softly-blended voices rising from the heart of the wilderness, suddenly oppressed him. He felt a desire to hear some familiar sound, though it be but that of his own voice, and he turned in his saddle to admonish his two pack mules who, tempted by the tender young grass, had been loitering by the way.

"Here, you jacks——"

But the two mules were not snatching greedy mouthfuls of the juicy grass. Instead, with heads held high and long ears aslant, they stood motionless, eyes fixed on something in the forest far to their right. Presently they snorted in unison and trotted up to the horse, as if seeking comfort and reassurance from the animal they had so blindly followed through gloomy canyons and dim forest aisles.

"Come along, you two," remonstrated the youth. "You're always getting scared at nothing. Every wildcat you smell, you think it a bear or a mountain lion. Come now, we'll soon make camp."

Then, as the mules continued to stare at the fearsome Something in the pines—to the sight of the man, scarcely the height of toy trees—he rather anxiously followed their gaze. But amid the shifting lights and shadows, he could distinguish no form of menace. Possibly the mules had scented a bear, and were staging the usual alarm. But now the horse had caught sight of the dread Something. Head high, he gave vent to a long, whistling snort. The youth could feel the great muscles tense and quiver.

"Old Faithful sees it, too," he muttered.

He glanced down at his gun to make sure the caps were on the nipples. Whatever it was, he was prepared to receive it. Two shots in the rifle and six in each of his heavy pistols.

SUDDENLY he saw something moving through the trees far to his right; and, at last, from the shifting lights and shadows of the forest, three riders emerged. They were not coming directly toward him, but were obliquing toward the white rock. Then, quickly turning his head, he saw another trio of riders emerging from the forest to his left, tiny figures scarcely a hand high. And then he saw, far back on his trail, two moving dots.

Indians!

They were bent on surrounding him, on forcing him to make a stand in the shelterless opening. This was his first Indian attack, but his self-control and practical sense did not desert him.

For a moment he considered the feasibility of making a stand in the opening, but his uncle had told him of the Indian's "circle of death," and he realized that his only hope lay in making a race for the great white rock nearby. No fear clamored in his heart; he was as calm as when he was making the double-barreled gun in the little shop, yet he was conscious of a savage irritation. The Indians would secure his outfit. Each carefully selected article was now priceless, for it could not be replaced without a long, toilsome journey. He had no hatred against the speeding warriors, but he had the Anglo-Saxon's attachment to property. For what was his, he would fight. It might be only a handful of salt, but, if it was his, he would fight for it.

With difficulty he held in his wild and frantic horse. Yet, as they got under way, the mules developed astonishing speed, and he gave Faithful the reins. Closely followed by the mules, the youth sped across the opening, passed far ahead of the obliquing lines of warriors, and plunged through the willows. Faithful cleared the stream at one bound.

He reached the shelter of the rock, flung himself from his horse, and for the first time the voice of the double-barreled rifle, with crashing reverberations, smote the silence of the Spirit Hills.

The nearest trio halted abruptly, as the ounce ball raised a warning spurt of dirt far in front of them. Both trios then rode swiftly toward the center of the opening and disappeared back of a great clump of willows.

Aletes watched the two advancing along his trail until they, too, disappeared back of the willows.

The spurt of dust had told him that they were not within the range of his rifle, and he resolved to hold his fire until sure of hitting a horse or a rider. What were they doing back of the willows? The delay strained his nerves far more than the thought of the numerical odds against him. Why didn't they attack? He was half-minded to move on.

Back of him was a tangle of brush. Beyond the brush, a long opening between the pines seemingly led into another park. The rock, its inner walls forming a great triangle, afforded shelter on two sides for himself and his stock. Out from the rock ran natural barricades of stone. Perhaps, if he raced on, he would not soon find another such a natural breastwork. He

Indians!

placed his ammunition within easy reach, and awaited the next move of the Indians.

It was plain that none of them possessed a gun. The great rifle was true, and possessed tremendous shocking power. He would make each shot count. He was confident that the war party would not pay the price he set on his life. He would kill one or two of them and the others would fall back.

With the indomitable egotism and self-reliance of his race, he gave little thought to the possibilities of defeat, nor did he offer up any prayers to the god of victory. He looked to his arms; they would decide who was to live and who was to die.

II

My medicine protects me,
No arrow can touch me.
My medicine is strong,
Hey, hey, my medicine is strong!
—*Medicine Song.*

BACK of the screening willows, eight young Dakotas dismounted to pray to Wakantanka (Great Spirit) and to invoke the protection and favor of their guardian spirits.

Twenty winters would have spanned their average age, but they were warriors all, with no hint of softness nor callowness. Their youth was indicated by the faultless symmetry of their lithe bodies, the barely perceptible ripple of muscle under their bronzed skins, the easy resiliency of their movements.

They wore moccasins, thigh leggins and breech-cloths more to avoid scratches and bruises than for protection against wind, sun and rain. Across their naked backs were slung combination bow and arrow cases, from several of which depended the claws of the mountain lion. Heavy knives hung in ornamented sheaths from their belts, and each youth carried a highly-ornamented pouch in which he kept his paints and various personal belongings. Slung from straps in such fashion as not to interfere with the use of the bow, they carried small round shields of thick buffalo hide, over which were two covers of dressed deerskin. Between the covers were kept the emblems of their respective guardian spirits, the "medicine" that would ward off misfortune, evil, wounds and death. The shields had been made by medicine-men who had received in dreams spiritual instructions as to their design and ornamentation. The medicine-men had given them to the youths with much ceremony, and had been suitably rewarded. To each warrior his shield was sacred, and there were certain taboos and obligations he must observe or it would not protect him.

Petuspa (Firebrand), the war chief, had said that it was the holy duty of a Dakota to kill a white man when and where he found him. The white men were invading the land of the Dakotas, scattering and killing the buffalo, taking only the tongues and leaving the good, sweet meat for the coyotes and wolves. On the buffalo depended the lives of the Dakotas. Without the meat of the buffalo how could they prepare the nourishing *wasna* (pemmican) against the needs of winter, when the North Wind whipped the snow around the banked-up tipis, and the great herds had drifted far to the south? Elk meat would not feed the Dakotas, neither could they exist on deer meat. No meat was as rich and nourishing as buffalo meat, nothing as satisfying as the marrow of buffalo bones. The Great Spirit had given them the buffalo. They could spare everything but the buffalo. To the words of Petuspa they had listened not only with their ears but with their hearts.

Also, they had other scores to settle with the white man. Had he not sent liars among them, saying that he loved

peace, when always was he fighting? He loved peace only when it was to his advantage. Back of all his words loomed death. Aye, to kill a white man was a good deed!

Each warrior, though eager for the fray, was bound by the religious customs of his tribe. In a spiritual sense, each red youth drew apart from his comrades to consult his "medicine."

In the hollow of his hand, the Whirlpool (Miniomni in Dakota) held his totem, a fragment of quartz crystal. He called it The-frozen-water-the-sun-cannot-bite. To him it was the symbol of the soul of the "Turning Water," for to the Indian everything has a soul.

Now he seemed to hear his guardian spirit speak with the voice of the Turning Water.

In chanting tones, and swaying to and fro, he repeated what his guardian spirit told him.

"Miniomni shall do a great deed!
He alone shall fight the white man!
With knives shall Miniomni and the white man fight!
The white man shall Miniomni slay; his hair shall Miniomni take!"

Upon him came the delirium of heroism; he became possessed of the fighting madness. His lips drew back from his teeth in a wolf snarl, and his eyes became set and glaring.

He sprang on his horse and rode to and fro in front of his comrades, boasting that he would cut off the white man's ears and make him eat them.

He added an interesting touch to the effect that he would cut out the white man's heart and eat it but for the fact that he did not want to become a coward and a liar. This was not intended as humor, for he believed, if one ate the heart of an enemy, that he would acquire both the virtues and weaknesses of his fallen foe.

To and fro he rode, working himself up to the highest pitch of excitement.

His comrades made no comment and offered no objection. The spirit of Miniomni had spoken first, his medicine was strong, and it was his privilege to demand, if his spirit so ruled, the honor of single combat.

Abruptly the Whirlpool turned his pony and dashed through an opening in the willows. His comrades slipped through the tangle, crossed the little stream and crawled through the willows on the far bank, to watch, from covert the Whirlpool advance on the hidden white man.

AT FIRST, Aletes thought the lone warrior, riding toward him in zigzag fashion, was an emissary of peace. His uncle had instructed him in Indian signs and customs, and he waited, hoping to see the advancing warrior raise empty hands in the sign of peace.

Nearer and nearer came the zigzagging rider, but instead of the sign of peace he brandished a knife. Slowly it dawned on the white youth that the Indian was challenging him to a knife duel.

The foolhardiness of the Dakota puzzled him. Why should the Indian indulge in such a parade when there was nothing to be gained. But, perhaps, he was creating a diversion, while his comrades executed a flank movement.

His fingers cuddled the twin triggers, yet he hesitated to shoot down the daring brave. Admiration stirred within him and he was reluctant to destroy so valiant a foe.

Now he could see the paint on the face of the brave, distinguish his ornaments and decorations. The little round shield was a tempting mark, an inviting bull's eye. The white youth was an indifferent hand with a pistol, but with a rifle he was cold, deadly certainty itself.

The Whirlpool came on, brandishing his knife and yelling insults.

The harsh taunting tones raised the hair on the back of the white youth's neck. He could not understand the words of the reckless savage, but he could sense the insults. Though he held the life of the red man under his two fingers, some fierce desire for close combat stirred within him. But he was too far removed from the days of clashing swords to give way to the impulse. Between him and the sword-wielder were too many practical, hard-headed men, too many generations that had concentrated on the invention and making of superior weapons. He would, as his uncle had often advised him, use common sense. He would kill the Indian and that would make one less.

The Whirlpool had dismounted, and was now slowly advancing, pausing at times to brandish his knife, to stamp the ground like a buck in rutting season, or to make known by sign and insulting gesture his ardent desire to cross blades with his hereditary enemy.

The little round shield came into the sights of the double-barreled rifle. Reluctantly, since he could not entirely put aside admiration for the reckless courage of the red man, Aletes pressed the forward trigger. The great gun responded with a withering blast that swept from the pines a vast, lingering reverberation.

Slowly the Whirlpool sank to earth. Hastily Aletes reloaded the right barrel, glancing, as he placed a cap on the nipple, at his deadly handiwork. He should have shot him in the head, and finished him quickly. But the little round shield had been too tempting.

"You're a brave rascal," he muttered; "a brave rascal just the same."

The Whirlpool had raised himself up on his elbow, a hand over the great wound in his side. Yet, despite his swiftly-ebbing strength, he managed to raise his painted face to the sky, clear, save for a single gleaming cloud that to his dimming eyes held the shape of a mighty hovering eagle.

No longer was he the Whirlpool. He would enter the land of spirits proudly bearing a new name. He began singing his death-song.

"Lo, I tread the way of darkness,
But my people will remember,
For a new name I am given—
Shining Eagle-cloud, O comrades!
Shining Eagle-cloud——"

The faint chanting faltered. He sank back, drew his knees up convulsively, and then relaxed, his filming eyes staring up at the bright cloud. Then, suddenly, the life left him, and he was merely that which would soon return to dust.

III

Now from the taut string springing,
Straight my way and swift my winging;
To the soft flesh go I, singing
Of the death my fang is bringing.
—*Arrow Song.*

THE comrades of the dead Miniomni now began a spectacular attack that would have been frowned on by older and more experienced warriors. Under cover of the willows, they rode some distance up the bank of the stream, crossed over, and, with long intervals between them, dashed back, parallel with the rock, hanging from the backs and necks of their ponies.

Through the sights, Aletes saw horse after horse pass at top speed, with only a leg and the tip of a feather showing above the line of its back. Yet from each hidden wild rider arrows rose in curving flights.

The deadly hiss of the feathered shafts made him cringe involuntarily. However, the great rock afforded ample protection on the front and left for him and his stock. He had little to fear if they continued this sort of thing, but they might try to gain his rear. The rock was shaped like the corner of a great roofless room, open to attack on right and rear. If they gained his rear, they could easily stampede his stock and set him afoot. Then, sooner or later, he would fall asleep, and their arrows would find him.

Now they were coming back, this time veering in a little closer. He held his breath, and, the moment a speeding horse entered the sights, he pressed the forward trigger; and, ere the mighty echoes ceased crashing among the trees, he pressed the rear trigger. He saw two warriors spring clear of their floundering ponies and run in zigzag fashion for the cover of the willows. Feverishly he reloaded, but, by the time the caps were on the nipples, the runners had disappeared, and the riders, now far to his left, were returning to the shelter of the willows. Apparently the parade was over.

Now he decided to move on. He placed his rifle in its scabbard, loosened the flaps of his pistol holsters, and mounted. He didn't think much of the six-shooters, but, in a running fight, he could at least make a lot of noise with them.

If he could find some position where his flanks could not be turned and where there was shelter for his stock, he knew he could work frightful havoc with the rifle. That was his weapon—the long rifle.

With the pack mules thumping behind him, he trotted up the pine-hedged passageway which, he now saw, with some misgivings, sloped up to a gap between great masses of rock. Apparently that gap was the only outlet.

The warriors had, for a few moments, in the shelter of the willows, gravely considered the exceedingly strong medicine of the white man.

Never before had they heard a gun that "times-two-quickly-spoke." This white man's gun did not talk slowly, *Bang! Bang!* Lo, this white man's gun said, *Bang-bang!* And, behold, two horses went down!

It was very apparent that they could not hope to secure the hair of this white man by a frontal attack. The quick-talking gun was very strong medicine. They decided to make an attempt to turn his right flank.

While they were counseling, Miniomni's horse came crashing through the willows. The two warriors whose ponies had been killed mounted the animal.

The party followed the stream into the pines, then curved back toward the rock. Tying their ponies in an opening amid thick quaking asp, they glided swiftly through the brush and tangle. As they came within bow range of the rock, they saw their quarry riding up the long opening between the pines.

Without a spoken word or sigh, but naturally as coyotes "angle" a jackrabbit, they turned and ran back to their horses, and sped up a parallel passageway, coming out in time to see the white man heading up the slope and toward the gap between the masses of rock.

Pung! Seven bowstrings twanged.

Aletes was beyond bowshot, but the mules, some distance back of him, offered fair targets for the hissing arrows of the Dakotas. They received the iron-pointed shafts dumbly. Crazed with pain, they whirled, and bucking, pitching and lashing out with their heels, in futile attempts to rid themselves of the arrows in their flanks, they stampeded toward the Indians.

Aletes, plunging up the slope, opened fire with one six-shooter, but he might as well have saved his ammunition. The little gun was only effective in the hand of a man who by long practice had learned how to use it under any and all conditions.

The Dakotas promptly killed the mules, and, as the white man disappeared over the crest, they leaped from their ponies, and taking every advantage of cover, ran up the slope. They knew that on either side of their fleeing enemy was a wall of rock, and that below him yawned a steep-walled canyon. But the one and only avenue of escape they overlooked, for, though familiar with the country, they were not infallible.

Swiftly they ran up to the crest of the rise, and dropped to their hands and knees and crawled forward until they could look down into the canyon. But the white man had disappeared! For a moment superstition clutched them, and then, with exultant yelps, they raced down to the rim of the canyon wall.

They had overlooked the great stoneslide. There he was, half-way down its treacherous slope, his horse sliding on its haunches, amid rushing streams of rock and gravel. They sent a flight of arrows after him.

They saw the horse make a frantic lunge as the arrows struck it, then fall and slide against a dead pine upthrust above the rock and gravel. There the animal lodged, with the leg of its rider caught under it. They saw the horse struggle ineffectually and the man make a futile attempt to rise.

SIX of them drew their knives and plunged recklessly down the slope, each wildly eager to be the first to strike the white man and thereby win the greatest honor and be permitted to wear a feather of the royal eagle in commemoration of the deed. He who killed the invader and he who scalped him would also win honor, and "count coup," the formal token of victory in battle, but he who first struck the living enemy would gain the greatest distinction, since that indicated close quarters, and to him would be given the weapons of the slain.

The Panther, older and more cautious and thoughtful, paused on the brink of the slide, an arrow on his bow string. There was something about the performance that he did not like, something in which he sensed danger.

To Aletes, it seemed that his soul had detached itself from the body and assumed the rôle of a spectator, calmly watching the fleeting phantasmagoria of a terrible dream.

There was no sensation in the leg pinioned under the horse; probably broken, he thought. There was a dull, gnawing pain in his left shoulder. He turned his head, and nearly cut his chin on a protruding arrow head. The shaft had penetrated the shoulder muscle. A sliding fragment of rock thumped against his spine. He threw his head back in a straining effort to face his doom. Above him he glimpsed the wild savage figures; they seemed to be floating down. He must get a weapon—somehow—some way——"

Now the leading figure poised for a breath, knife in hand. It was Scarlet Cloud who hoped to gain the highest honor, to be the first to strike the living foe.

Then came a terrific rifle blast. Mighty reverberations slapped the canyon walls, and thinned out into echoes that whispered in far, remote places.

The five reckless comrades of Scarlet Cloud plunged down the slide and into grotesque sprawls—twitching colorful forms against a gray background, with little avalanches flowing over their limbs or banking up against them.

The Panther felt something strike his arm. In one leap he gained cover, and, by crawling on his hands and knees, managed to slip over the rise, unseen by the white men of whom he had caught but a fleeting glimpse. He ran back to the ponies. He yearned to search the packs on the dead mules, and sentiment bade him secure the body of the valiant Miniomni, yet those were matters of little importance compared to rousing the warriors in the camp so that the slaughter of his comrades might be avenged. He mounted and swept down through the pines and across the great opening at full speed. As his pony settled down into the tireless cayuse lope, he glanced at his arm. The bullet had merely burned the skin. He would let the wind and sun irritate it that it might become a scar he could exhibit with pride.

Now from the brush beyond the foot of the slide, came a series of rifle shots, as though some angry giant were slamming a great door. The additional lead stopped the twitching of all but Scarlet Cloud. Shot through the lungs, right arm broken and knee-cap shattered, the life yet burned within him. A few feet above Aletes, he managed to hunch himself down the slide, though every move must have cost him exquisite torture.

The white youth could see the red youth glaring down at him with implacable hostility. Then, in one final desperate effort, the Dakota threw himself on his broken arm, turned over and brought the tips of his fingers against the shoulder of his enemy. He had struck the living foe! He had counted coup! Faintly from his lips came the war cry.

A tall, gaunt man, with a matted dun-colored beard, cleft by a mammoth demonish grin, suddenly came into Aletes' line of vision. He bore a hand ax.

This uncouth apparition seized one of Scarlet Cloud's black braids, jerked the Indian's head up and back, and grinned down at him for a moment. Then, emitting a hoarse, throaty chortle, he knocked the warrior in the head.

Other men came crashing through the brush

Using the ax as he would use a knife, he deftly scalped his victim.

This done to his chortling satisfaction, he flung a glance at Aletes.

"Hurry up, Joe, and help me git this feller out'n his fix!" he called over his shoulder to a little man coming up the slide. Then to himself: "I calls this slick work. Six of them as neat as a cat's whisker. Good, clean shootin'!"

The little man came up to the dead pine. Aletes heard him say something about the saddle cinch having caught on a "pitchy spike." The cinch loosened, the horse slid slowly from his anchorage and down the slide.

The tall man slipped powerful hands under Aletes' arms and hauled him to his feet. The youth was greatly relieved to find that no bones were broken.

"How many was there, young feller?" asked the little man, leaning his rifle against the tree. His weapon had an octagon barrel the size of a shovel handle, and lacked only a few inches of its owner's height. "We popped six. How many was there?"

"Eight," Aletes told him, suddenly feeling the need of the tall man's steadying hand. "I shot one—and two horses."

The little man had drawn the youth's rifle from the scabbard as the horse slid clear of the tree. He now blew the dust and dirt from it and examined it closely.

"A married gun," he chuckled. "Mister and Missus Bang-bang! Fust I ever saw. A right handy and sweet weapon, I say."

He placed the double-barreled rifle with his and scrambled up to Aletes.

"What's that in your shoulder? Didn't you know you had an arrer stickin' in yeh?" Then to the tall axwielder: "Prayerful, you keep an eye skinned at the top o' that wall. Might be some Injuns follerin' these scamps. I'll fix this boy up."

He notched the shaft, carefully broke off the head, and, in one quick pull, jerked the shaft from the clinging flesh. The youth felt his stomach heave, and for a moment he thought his legs would give way under him.

"Jes' under the hide a little," the garrulous amateur surgeon assured his patient. "Slap a little terbacker on it to stop the bleedin' and you won't know you was ever hit. Prayerful, you bring his gun.

"Prayerful, you know," he explained, as he helped Aletes down the slide, "allers cleans up after an Injun killin'. Knocks 'em all in the head to make sure there's no 'possum-playin'. Prizes skelps more'n I do beaver skins. How you makin' it?"

"I'm all right," the youth said with a smile. "A little bruised, that's all."

At the foot of the slide, a French half-breed came up with a hatful of water which Aletes drank gratefully. Other men came crashing through the brush, frontiersmen and half-breeds.

IV

I gits two squaws
From the Omahas,
Fer a jug of Mountain Dew;
They're fat and fine,
Them gals of mine,
And whirlwinds with the stew.

My skin is white but my heart is wild,
As wild as wild kin be;
And I'm bound to say, as I go my way,
No pale-face gals fer me.

I like the squaws
Of the Omahas,
But the Crow gals I like, too;
And once a-while,
To change my style,
I pick me out a Sioux.

A squaw you quit when you want a change,
Walk off and leave her be;
But the white gals clutch, and ask too much
To suit the likes of me.

—*Trapper Song*

UNDER the expert ministrations of the little frontiersman, whom he was soon calling Joe, Aletes found himself enjoying some surcease from the twinge and pull of the wound in his shoulder.

Joe was as talkative as a magpie and as active as a chipmunk. His beard shot upward from his chin, ending in a billy-goat tuft that his chronic gar-

rulity kept in constant motion.

"What say the name was, boy? Oh, yes, A-lee-teez. Hold on now, whar'd I hear that name afore? Somewhere —now let's see. By the staggerin' tracks of my great grandpaw, it's on old Never-fail!"

He snatched up his long rifle, and held the barrel under Aletes' nose.

"There she is right there, plain as daylight," he exclaimed triumphantly. "I knowed I'd heerd the name afore."

Aletes nodded.

"Yes," he said quietly, "that is one of our guns. We made only three of that style and pattern. My uncle always named each gun."

"Well, well, who'd a-thunk it!" Joe marveled. "Here we was goin' along, and then, all a-sudden, you come tearin' down that slide, with the Injuns steppin' on your hind legs. Up goes old Never-fail, and the rest of them, and ka-whang! Then I find out that the very gun I help stop the Injuns with was made by your hand—or the help of your hand. Hain't she strange how things twist around! By the staggerin' tracks of my great grandpaw, she's a queer world! Boy, I'm stickin' to you! You don't talk, and that's the kind of pard I want. Oh, I know I talk all the time; it somehow helps me. I've talked myself out'n many a hole, many a tight corner. It comes nat'ral to me, same as keepin' still comes nat'ral to you, or honin' fer skelps comes nat'ral to Prayerful. Ev'ry man to his way of livin' and dyin'. Now you set here and take it easy, and I'll see to your hoss. He's a couple of stickers in him, but nothin' to make him lay down. I'll be back directly."

As Joe disappeared in the brush in the direction of the wounded horse, a fat, pouchy-cheeked, ferret-eyed man, clad in a long-skirted black coat, buckskin trousers and boots, and wearing a high, bell-crowned hat, came up and introduced himself to Aletes.

"I am Doctor Mubsley," he announced pompously. "I take it that under the conditions you will join my party."

Mubsley had been an actor, an auctioneer, a tooth-puller and a quack doctor. Then he had drifted West and become a trader. Alcohol, he had found, would secure almost anything the average Indian possessed. While the main purpose of his invasion of the Spirit Hills was to find gold, he had brought along several kegs of alcohol with which he hoped to strip the Dakotas of their choicest robes and skins. He was yet a little shaken with the shock of battle, and his pouchy cheeks quivered perceptibly.

"I may say," he went on, removing his monstrous hat and flicking some drops of perspiration from his brow, "I may say that I hardly expected this, but you can remain with my party until such time as other arrangements can be made. You can help the half-breeds."

"Not by a long shot, Doc!" exploded Joe, suddenly parting the brush back of the pseudo medico. "That boy don't help no breeds. He goes along with us, and does as he pleases till he and I git some idee of how we're goin' to strike out together."

"But this is my party," blustered Mubsley.

"Maybe so," snapped Joe, "but I'm doin' the talkin'. "I ain't so pertic'ler 'bout hangin' with you, Mubsley. I agreed to guide you in these here mountains, but I ain't married to you none. Besides you're talkin' to hear yourself talk, when we should be movin' on. This little fight has changed things a heap. We'd better hit back fer the River. One Injun got away, and Petuspa won't rest when he hears seven of his young men are wiped out."

"If you knew that the killing of the Indians would bring trouble down on us, why did you give the signal to fire?" bleated Mubsley.

"You're talkin' only with your mouth," Joe grumbled impatiently. "Your words don't make sense. I'm white. When I see a white man chased by Injuns, I open with old Never-fail. As fer this bein' your party, you ought to know better than that. No man has a party in this country—leastwise not of white men. No man says to me, 'you belong to my party.' I belong to myself. Any time I want to go, I take my salt and old Never-fail and go. If you don't like my style, you and me strike diff'rent trails right now."

"I'm through with you," Mubsley stormed, striking a dramatic attitude. "We shall proceed without you." He turned to the other frontiersmen, trappers mostly, and border scalawags cast from the same mould that had turned out Joe. "Men, bring up the pack train."

Joe laughed dryly.

" 'Men,' " he mimicked, " 'bring up the pack train.' " Then, in natural tones, "But where you goin' to take it, when you bring it up? Which way you goin', and who's goin' to tell you how to git out'n here. Not Joe Rakin, fer Joe and his young pard here are trailin' alone."

"You can't break up my party!" yelled Mubsley. "I won't have it. My orders shall be obeyed. My money is paying for this—I shall——"

AT THIS juncture, a little thin man, wearing a coat of the Mubsley pattern, trotted up, waving womanish hands.

"Peace," he cried, rolling his eyes. "Brethren, let there be peace between you."

Aletes saw Joe smile contemptuously.

"You'll have peace, Deacon," grinned the little frontiersman; "everlastin' peace, if the Sioux git hold of you. You ain't no hair to lose, but a man gener'ly prizes that most which he's got the least of."

A fanatical gleam came into the deep-set eyes of the Deacon.

"I came to save the souls of the savages," he whined, "to bring sweetness and light and forgiveness."

"But all you've done," drawled Joe, "is to keep good grub from sp'ilin'."

Abruptly Mubsley whirled on the fanatic, and smacked his face with his open hand.

"Shut up that whine!" he bellowed, welcoming an opportunity to vent his rage against Joe on the helpless and inoffensive effeminate. "I'm sick of your blat! Get back and stay back, and don't talk when men are speaking!"

"I and my pard here are strikin' out," announced Joe, ignoring Mubsley's outburst, and dropping Never-fail into the crook of his arm.

"With Mubsley we will not stay," said one of the half-breeds in Sioux. "With Joe we will go."

"I'm trailin' with Joe," declared Prayerful, and crossed over to the side of the independent frontiersman.

Another frontiersman followed Prayerful. He was a big man, with a great paunch, but apparently as active as a weasel. He was known as Squeaky Bill. Sometimes he was called the Squaw-killer. His beard, black and bristly, grew within a half-inch of his eyes, and his eyebrows were a straight black bar. Between his eyebrows and his hair line was scarcely a finger-breadth of forehead. Oddly enough, considering his bulk, he spoke in a thin high soprano.

"I'm with Joe," he squeaked.

The other frontiersmen and the breeds gathered around Joe. Mubsley, finding himself deserted by all save the Deacon, who was now hovering near him, hands waving and thin lips twitching, now quickly changed front.

"Now, now," he cried, with a throaty gurgle, "we must get along. My temper got the best of me, Joe. He waved his arms in token of surrender, and smiled blandly. "We must stand together," he added dramatically, "against the red devils."

Joe chuckled. Always was Mubsley amusing. One could read the fakir as easily as he could follow a buffalo water trail, yet the big blow-hard thought he was cunning and clever.

"Oh, all right, then," he agreed shortly. "We'll hit fer the river." He turned briskly to the breeds. "Git the pack mules movin' now." Then to the frontiersmen: "This boy and I will go ahead. Two of you foller up the breeds. Prayerful, you and Bill kin work along the sides. Look sharp, fer that Injun that got away may not have fur to go to git help. Now, let's move."

Faithful had lost considerable blood, but now, with the arrows removed and the wounds washed by the tireless Joe, the horse seemed little the worse for his battle experience. Joe helped Aletes into the saddle. They moved up to the head of the little column. Mubsley, mounted on a small mule, fell in ahead of the pack train.

"Too bad my misfortune broke up your plans," remarked Aletes to Joe, as the column moved off.

"Never you fret, my boy. Only thing I'm sorry about is that we ain't the time to git your outfit. I know you must set a store by your stuff, but we've lost too much time a'ready. I was foolish to come with this oufit anyway. Trail alone, I say, or with a good pard. Never mix with a bunch, ner work fer no man. Mubsley thought to pick up nuggets the size of hen eggs. But he's full of foolish idees. We found some gold, here and there, enough, maybe, to put in a holler tooth, but not enough to pay. I should a-stuck to my trappin'. A man should stick to what he knows he kin do. I ain't no gold miner; I'm a trapper. I know beaver from beginnin' to end, but what I don't know about gold is more'n I could tell in ten thousand moons. Yep, a man should stick to what he knows how to do."

Aletes made no reply to Joe's chatter, and yet he wondered why the little man had not questioned him. He was yet to learn that, while Joe was a chronic spiller of words, he never asked direct questions. The frontiersman might volunteer information, but he was careful not to pry into any man's private affairs. He simply liked to talk.

The youth saw that, temporarily at least, he would have to give up his quest of the stream his uncle had named Pactolus. He might return to civilization and secure a new outfit, but that was too far in the future to give much thought.

With Joe leading the way, they followed the stream down until it opened

Mubsley found himself deserted

out into a great park. There, with guards out, they rested. Deer stood agaze within easy range, but Joe would permit no shooting. They ate sparingly of pemmican, and washed it down with cold mountain water.

Joe, with some idea of "blinding the trail," led them up a tributary of the stream they had been following. This was tedious work, for at times the current eddied around their waists. Aletes, however, was put to little strain, as Faithful splashed methodically up the stream. Shortly before sundown they came to a high divide, sparsely timbered, but covered with rich grass. There they rested until nightfall.

With difficulty Aletes gained his feet. He was stiff and sore and his wound was throbbing. Joe helped him into the saddle, and led the way through the gloom.

T DAWN they were descending a game trail that zig-zagged down to a swift-flowing stream.

"We'll foller this crick down," Joe told the youth. "It's a queer crick. Down at the mouth of the canyon, she runs under the wall and that's the end of her."

Aletes, despite his natural calmness, gasped a little. Why, this was the stream his uncle had described! He visualized the map his uncle had drawn. Should he share the secret with these men? To secure the gold alone, would mean a return to civilization and a long, toilsome journey back to the mountains.

These men had saved his life. It was only fair that he should tell them that here was the stream in whose bank his uncle had found the gold.

When they reached the floor of the canyon, he reined in his horse.

"What's the trouble?" asked Joe. "Feelin' sick?"

"No; I have something to say."

Mubsley came up, followed by Prayerful and Squeaky Bill and the other frontiersmen.

"I want to tell you about this stream," said the youth, in his quiet fashion. "There is gold here. My uncle found gold here—nuggets. I have a sack of them in my pocket. You are searching for gold. I thought it no more than right that I should tell you. You have been kind to me. I've a map that will prove what I say."

Mubsley flung himself from his little mule.

"Let's see the nuggets!" he almost yelled.

Aletes gave him the little buckskin sack.

Now the half-breeds came up. Their eyes glittered as the dully-gleaming nuggets rolled into Mubsley's palm.

"But we can't stop," remonstrated Joe. Yet he picked over the nuggets in his employer's hand.

"It's gold all right—the pure quill," he commented excitedly.

"Let's see the map," demanded Mubsley. "If the stuff is like this, we can clean up enough here in a few days to make us all rich."

"But the Injuns—the Injuns!" whined Joe, dancing about, but invariably returning to the fascinating nuggets, as though hypnotized by their dull gleam.

"Indians hell!" bellowed Prayerful. "I'll take a chanct."

"Same here," squeaked Bill.

"That's it," chortled Mubsley. "We'll stay—we'll stay. Now the map—the map!"

"In my right saddle bag," Aletes quietly directed, marveling not a little at the mad excitement the sight of the nuggets had aroused.

Mubsley clawed forth the map and

spread it on the ground.

"That's it," Joe exulted, now as excited as his employer. "Whoever drawed that map knowed what he was doin'. I know this crick, and he sure was here. There's the place where he found the nuggets—above the p'int where the crick slides under the wall."

Suddenly he threw up his head and barked at Squeaky Bill and Prayerful: "Keep an eye out fer the Injuns. We don't all have to look at this map." He flicked the paper. "Yep, that's it. I know the place like my feet know their moccasins."

"Go ahead, then," ordered Mubsley. "We'll be rich men before we know it."

V

I am the stream of which men dream,
For me the bold and daring
Have sailed the deep and scaled the steep,
And to their doom went faring.

I am the stream of which men dream,
For me the coward, quailing,
Has crushed his fears and hushed his tears,
And cursed the thought of failing.

I am the stream of which men dream,
Be they awake or sleeping;
To seize and hold my lees of gold,
They'd blind the world with weeping.

—*Song of Pactolus*

"NOW," said Joe to Aletes, as they came out on a wide bar, spotted here and there with clumps of quaking asp, "this p'int here is about a half-mile above where the crick runs under the canyon wall. But your map don't show where they found the gold—jes' says about half-mile above where the crick goes out'n sight."

"My uncle said they built a monument of rocks, and he gave me directions for finding the spot where they dug. The monument is on the south side of the canyon above the flood line."

"You say they were in here thirty year ago," pondered Joe. "Well, things would change a heap in thirty years. Cloud-bursts have come down this canyon in that time, sweepin' it as clean as a rabbit's snoot. One thing certain, we won't find where they dug. That'll be all filled in and brushed over. They prob'ly didn't dig deep, and——"

"The thing to do is to look for the monument," broke in Mubsley impatiently.

He turned to the breeds and waved his arms toward the far side of the canyon.

"Rocks-high-hand laid-search!" he shouted in Sioux.

After a prolonged search, they found the monument, grown over with raspberry bushes and weathered to the tones of its background. Topping it was a flat stone on which had been scratched the names of the party, with an arrow pointing in the direction of their find. The name of the youth's uncle headed the list.

"That's it," said Aletes confidently. He patted the stone. "My uncle never made any mistakes. Everything is just as he told me."

"But the gold isn't here," grumbled Mubsley, looking around him as if he half expected to see lumps of the precious stuff scattered about.

"My uncle said to walk five hundred paces due north, which should bring us close to the bank of the stream. He said they dug in a bar along the stream. We'll see how it comes out."

He drew a small compass from his pocket, lined up with a lightning-blasted pine on the opposite side of the canyon, and slowly descended the slope.

A few paces from the stream he halted and glanced around him. Perhaps there yet lingered some sign of the feverish work of the gold-seekers. But not even a dimple in the ground remained. Nature had long since filled in and smoothed over all evidences of the work of restless man.

"This is as near as I can get to it," he told Mubsley. "If you have tools, the next thing to do is to dig."

Mubsley looked at the ground dubiously, displaying no eagerness to doff his long coat. All his life he had been looking for easy money. Digging in no way appealed to him. But there were the half-breeds; they could dig. He ordered them to unpack and bring up the picks and shovels.

Aletes turned to Joe, while Mubsley was shouting orders at the breeds.

"I'm sorry I can't help here," he said regretfully. "But it takes two hands to swing a pick."

"Jes' you set down somewhere and look on," Joe gently advised. "You'll git half of everything found anyway, as this is your find."

Mubsley whirled on the little frontiersman.

"You're too fast with dividing up what you haven't got," he snarled. "These are my tools and my men. I'll settle with him." He waggled his head at Aletes.

"You heard me talkin'," twanged Joe, patting Never-fail. "This boy led us here and this find belongs to him. Half of what we git goes to him, as is his right. This is his claim, not yours or mine. And I've been thinkin' we'd better start a new deal. Half to the boy here, and the rest split up among us, equal share to each man. You may own the outfit, but you gotta have us to keep your hair on your head. A man's hair is worth more'n any outfit. If you don't want us, why, we'll hold a meetin' and take over what you got fer the good of the most men. This here is a free country, and democratic. I've heerd, since I could tote a rifle, that the majority rules, and when the majority is concerned what one man thinks don't count."

"This is robbery!" spluttered the trader. "I never heard of such a thing."

"You're hearin' of it now, Mister Mubsley," Joe grinned. "And I wouldn't try to change the deal." He cocked Never-fail. "Accidents will happen, you know. I've heerd of accidents happenin' to men like you. Gun goes off, and there's a dead man, and nobody knows how it happened. There's no law here, and so we've the right to make our own. If we should figger that you was goin' ag'in' what was right and proper fer this party, we could, if we wanted to, take a piece of rawhide and hang you by the neck."

Prayerful, who had been giving Joe's words rapt attention, broke into a hoarse bellow of laughter.

"Sure-fire and nineteen wildcats out'n hell with their tails tied together, Joe, you said all there was to be said!" he yelled. He gave Mubsley a terrific slap on the back. "Haugh, haugh, old whey-belly, you'd sure look purty, a-hangin' to a tree!"

Mubsley's thick lower lip hung slack and bloodless as a piece of tripe. He attempted to reply to the terrible neighing of Prayerful, but the words stuck in his throat.

"Let us have no more disputes," he finally managed to husk; "no more disputes."

Joe leaned Never-fail against a sapling and snatched a pick from a breed.

"Git at it," he ordered. "Mubsley, you don't seem to like heavy work, so you can help with the pannin'. You and Missoury and Buckskin kin pan and the rest of us will do the diggin'. And watch out," he added emphatically, "watch out fer Injuns. Gold won't do us no good with our hides full of Sioux arrers."

EACH man under Joe's quick orders went to work with a will. Mubsley even cast aside his long coat and great hat. Aletes, inwardly chafing at his enforced inactivity, seated himself near the squatting Buckskin, a little red-headed frontiersman who seemed to have had some experience in panning.

"I've prospected a little," he told the youth, "but trappin' comes more nat'ral to me." He held up the pan that Aletes might see the string of light colors following the black sand. "Not much in that fer this bunch."

Mubsley and Missouri had no better luck. Each one secured fine "colors," but no flakes of coarse gold or nuggets were uncovered by the swishing water.

As the day wore on, and only fine colors rewarded their strenuous efforts, Mubsley became grumpy and crestfallen. There was no money in this sort of work. The frontiersmen now openly scoffed at Aletes.

"I thought you said we would find gold here," whined Squeaky Bill. "All the gold we've got we could put on a skeeter's hind leg. That uncle of yourn musta been drunk when he was in here."

"My uncle never drank," replied the youth calmly. "And I will ask you not to refer to him in that way again."

"Who'll stop me?" flared the fat frontiersman.

"I will."

Squeaky clambered up and out of the "discovery" hole. For a moment he stared at the tall, thick-chested youth, and then strode up to him and gripped his right wrist.

Joe threw down his shovel, and secured Never-fail.

"Take your hand off me," said Aletes softly.

But Squeaky only grinned insolently, and tightened his grip.

Don was suffering from his wound, and had been weakened by the strain of the constant pain, but the rage rising within him, cold and terrible, more than offset what strength he had lost. He had been a worker in iron, and the natural strength of his hands was far above the ordinary. It had been no great feat for him to straighten a horseshoe with his hands.

He jerked free of Squeaky's grip and seized the frontiersman's hand. Squeaky welcomed the trial of strength. He would force the young rooster to his knees. Then into his little black eyes came a look of pained astonishment. The fingers that held his were fingers of iron. They closed remorselessly grinding the bones together. But that was only the start. The iron fingers closed tighter and tighter. Squeaky's knees began to sag, and the sweat popped out beneath his eyes. Still the iron fingers crushed his. Suddenly a thin whine broke from his lips, and he went down on his knees.

"By the staggerin' tracks of my great grandpaw," exclaimed Joe, "he made Squeaky squeal, and that, too, with a hurt shoulder! I give him a new name, so I do. Stronghand, I name him, right smack here and now."

Squeaky, on his knees, was striving weakly to break the terrible grip, but Aletes was thorough in all that he did.

"My uncle was an honest man," he informed the helpless frontiersman. "He said they found gold here—nuggets—and we will find that he told the truth." He threw aside the pulpy hand. "I want no trouble with you, but you must not say that my uncle is a liar."

"Right as a fox!" barked Joe. "Any time you can't handle 'em, old Never-fail will speak on your side. Now, Squeaky, take your mashed paw down to the crick, and after this don't let the wind blow in your mouth. And don't try no more tricks with my pard, either, or I'll take you in hand."

Muttering imprecations, Squeaky picked up his rifle and sought the creek to lave his "mashed paw" in the cold water.

Aletes ignored Squeaky. So far as he was concerned the incident was closed. But to Squeaky's saurian mind the incident was not closed. As soon as he recovered the use of his hand, he flung up his rifle. But Joe was ready. Even as Squeaky pressed trigger, Never-fail spoke. Joe had intended to kill. Killing a man had never disturbed the conscience of the little frontiersman, who, while he was ever loyal to the man he selected as his partner, was as bloodthirsty as a weasel. For some time he had wanted to kill Squeaky. He could offer no reason. Squeaky had always roused in him the desire to kill. Thus, when he had what seemed to him a good excuse, he let Never-fail speak his sentiments. But the lead struck Squeaky's gun, and incidentally smashed his trigger finger close to the knuckle.

He gripped the wrist of his wounded hand, and hopped about wildly.

"Now you've done it," he wailed thinly, as Joe sauntered down to him. "My finger's gone—my finger's gone!"

"Sure she's gone," said Joe calmly taking full marksmanship credit, though it was an accidental hit. "I allers git what I shoot at. I aimed to git a finger, and I got it. After this when I tell you to leave my young pard be, you'll think twict before cuttin' loose at him. Next time I'll put lead through your heart. Git back and let Prayerful fix you up. He'll tie up your paw and put goose grease on it."

There was little comment. To the frontiersmen the incident seemed trivial. They left Squeaky to his whining and the nursing of his maimed hand, and resumed their labors. Squeaky's bullet had passed through a corner of the fringed collar of Aletes' buckskin shirt. He dismissed the incident from his mind. The fat man was now helpless; he had lost his trigger-finger. There was no call for further thought of him.

Joe gave no thought to Squeaky, beyond regretting that his bullet had not found the big fellow's heart. But he did think of the two echoing rifle shots. The canqon was like a funnel to carry sound.

"Injuns," he muttered. "Injuns have ears, and mighty sharp ones." Then to Aletes, "what was you sayin' about bedrock, partner?"

"When we get down to bedrock, we will find the heavy gold," the youth patiently explained. "I do not know a great deal about placer mining, but my uncle said that they found the coarse gold and nuggets in the crevices in the bedrock. We can't expect to pick it up from the top of the ground."

"Yes, I guess that's right. But minin' ain't what I'm cut out fer. Same there with Prayerful and the rest, trappers mostly. Mubsley wouldn't know a mine from a badger hole. I'm thinkin' we'd better let go of this and break fer the open country. Them two shots could be heard fer a long ways, and I been smellin' Injuns all day. What say we gather up and go?"

"No, I think we should work a little longer," demurred Aletes. "We will soon be down to bedrock. Surely no man can expect to gather up a load of nuggets in a half day's work. Still, it is not for me to say. What the party wants suits me."

"All right, then," agreed Joe dubiously; "we'll do as you say—keep on diggin'."

"We've found mighty little for our work," complained Mubsley. "There's nothing in this fine stuff. But I sup-

pose we can keep on digging until dark. We ought to eat, though."

"Eat and dig, then," croaked Joe, "but I smell Injuns."

THEY ate some pemmican, and again fell to digging. But through the long afternoon they found only the light colors, and many pans showed no colors at all. Then suddenly the diggers broke into a "pocket." Mubsley became almost delirious as the heavy gold and nuggets trailed after the black sand.

"We've struck it!" he exulted. "We've struck it!"

Now each man fairly quivered with excitement. Even Joe forgot to croak, "I smell Injuns." They worked feverishly until nightfall.

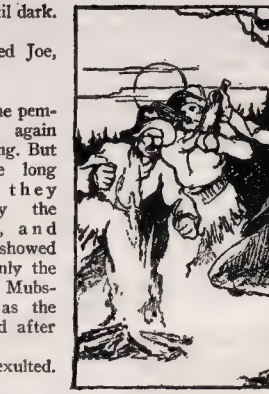
Though Joe counseled against it, and Mubsley grumbled, Prayerful and the other frontiersmen insisted on broaching a keg of the trader's alcohol to celebrate their good fortune. His grumbled objections were quickly overruled by the majority, and, when he had gulped several drinks in quick succession, he forgot that it was his precious alcohol they were wasting. But he was careful to keep in his possession the gold they had panned out. He had not offered to divide it, considering himself treasurer of the party. The frontiersmen said nothing about the gold. When they decided to divide it, they would divide it. If Mubsley clung to it, they would take it away from him by force.

The trader, reeling and staggering, with drunken generosity now bade the frontiersmen and the breeds, 'Drink'er down and forget your troubles." Diluting the alcohol with water, the hardy borderers swigged it as they would tea. In a short time they were roaring drunk. Naturally, on an intensely dark night, a spree cannot be thoroughly enjoyed without a fire. Thus they built a camp-fire and piled on the resinous branches.

They danced wild dances and sang weird songs.

"We got the world by the tail and the down-hill pull!" Mubsley bellowed, with the perspiration rolling down his pouchy cheeks.

Prayerful got out the scalps he had taken and performed a war dance. Even Squeaky Bill, soon raving drunk, forgot his smashed finger and boasted of his killings.



Squeaky Bill forget his smashed finger and boasted of his killings

"I'm a squaw-killer!" he yelled. "Kill a squaw and she don't raise Injuns! I'm a squaw-killer! I kill many squaws! I kill 'em—I kill 'em!"

Then Prayerful and Missouri caught the little Deacon, who had been remonstrating against their "evil ways," and forced a drink down his throat. He nearly strangled, but they had no mercy on him. They laughed uproariously when at last the alcohol mounted to the little fanatic's brain and he became girlish and simpering. The effect so pleased them that they forced him to drink again and again, until at last he fell sprawling into some bushes, and lay with his thin, expressionless face up to the dim stars.

The half-breeds drew apart from the white men and sang chanties of the Red River country. They were a people apart, neither Indian nor French. Yet, in their drunkenness, they did not become wild beasts as had Prayerful and the other frontiersmen, nor did they boast and bellow like Mubsley. The alcohol seemed to bring their Latin blood to the surface. They diluted it until it was little stronger than the wine of their fathers. They sang of their loved ones, gaily and blithely, danced a little and passed flowery compliments.

By midnight every white man, except Aletes and Joe was sprawled out on the ground, dead drunk. The breeds had sought their blankets, pleasantly befuddled. Joe was apparently only slightly intoxicated.

"I kin carry all the licker I kin pour in my hide without gittin' down. I'm in a class by myself that-o'-way," he explained.

Aletes had taken one drink, but, having no taste for the stuff and no desire for its effects, had quietly declined Mubsley's oft-repeated invitation of, "drink'er up; she's free as water!"

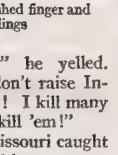
VI

We are the Little Rattlesnakes
That none may hear and none may see;
We give no warning,
We give no warning.

Creeping, crawling silently,
In the darkness silently;
We give no warning,
We give no warning.

Lo, our arrows bite the sleeper!
He awakens to fall asleep again;
We give no warning,
We give no warning.

—Song of the Little Rattlesnakes



IT WAS now the darkest hour, that period of intense stillness and almost palpable darkness just before the ghostly fingers of dawn begin to feel their way through gloomy canyon and black forest.

Aletes had been unable to sleep. Motionless and silent, he stared gloomily at the sprawling shapes about the fire, now a great bed of glowing coals—a wicked red eye winking at the night.

Joe had what he called a "walking drunk." He seemed to be continually in motion, like a humming-bird, and his tongue rattled incessantly. He came to Aletes, and walked round him, droning his everlasting monolog.

"Loaded to the muzzle—fer ev'ry hump there's a holler—higher you fly, furder you fall—head a-buzzin' but kin think all right—thinker fine as a fiddle. See what a cussed fool I be, and can't help it. Big-headed bunch in the mornin'—no good to dig gold. Look at Mubsley! A man I love—like hell! Bah! I've a big notion to see if I kin shoot that gold out'n his hand." He half-raised Never-fail. "No, let him keep his plaything. Take it away from him when I want it. Old Never-fail and me take everything we want. And that gun was made by your hands! Oh, yes, you said something about an uncle, but I know—that'll do to say. Not the braggin' kind—no brag about you a-tall, boy. Clean-strain and with sand in your craw. Me and you's pards to the finish. I claim that you'n I——"

"The mules have been acting as

though they were frightened at something," Aletes finally managed to interrupt. "My mules whistled and snorted long before I saw the Indians."

"Yes, I know," sniggered Joe. "A mule is like some men—snort at their own shadder. I've seen men jes' that way. Of course I smell Injuns, but what's the use to bother about it with this bunch. All down, 'cept us, and it's all I kin do to keep from steppin' on both ears. Kin think, but the body wants to run 'round in a circle. Mules scared—yes, a mule's born scared, scared he won't turn out to be a jack or a hoss, and winds up by bein' nothin'. Sometimes a mule is right and sometimes he ain't. Bear in here, and a bear will give a mule the runnin' gazimpoes. Mountain lion everywhere in here, and a mountain lion would make a mule leave his youngun—hold on, I'm goin' too fur. A mule don't have no younguns. I over-shot that time. I shore must be drunk! When a man my age gits up and claims mules have younguns, he's shore drunk and should be knocked in the head and put to bed," he snickered.

He attempted a little skip, caught himself and resumed his walk-around.

It seemed to Aletes that the incessant drone of Joe's voice was actually rubbing his wound; at least the twinging and throbbing increased. He stepped farther back into the darkness, hoping the talkative frontiersman would not follow. But the little man was not to be shaken off. The youth rested an elbow on his rifle, and settled down to endure the interminable monolog.

For an infinitesimal fraction of a second, Aletes' mind held the thought that he was dreaming. There had come, out of the night, a deadly, vicious swishing, and the shapes about the fire suddenly bristled with feathered shafts. He caught a glimpse of Mubsley's legs jerking convulsively. Joe had disappeared.

Don whirled and leaped blindly, with some thought of reaching his horse, picketed below the camp. But he had been staring at the fire, and the darkness was like a black curtain before him. He crashed into some bushes and went down on his knees. The next moment he was hurled flat on his back and his gun torn from his grasp. A hand clutched his throat and another his hair. He felt a heavy body across his legs. He heard a guttural command. He felt his pistols drawn from their holsters and his knife from its sheath. Then he was hauled to his feet. He caught the racial reek of his captors. They were Indians—his merciless enemies.

His practical sense regained control, and he calmly faced the stark reality. This, then, was the end.

They hustled him up to the fire. He now became aware that a tall, young warrior, with a slightly wounded arm, was glaring at him murderously.

The Panther, sole survivor of the stoneslide massacre, and now possessor of the double-barreled rifle, was eager to kill the young white man, but his chief had ordered that the captive be held for torture in the camp of the band. Since the chief was the relentless Petuspa, the Panther did not dare to satisfy his blood-lust. Yet he pressed the muzzle of the double-barreled rifle against Aletes' chest, and spoke bitter, taunting words.

"Here is the white man who would not fight Miniomni," he shouted to the warriors pressing in from all sides, "the white man who hid in the rock and struck like a snake. This is the coward who would not fight Miniomni. This is He-whose-gun-speaks-two-times-quickly."

There came harsh, guttural responses from the warriors. Their painted faces held only merciless hostility.

A warrior threw some wood on the fire. Aletes shivered a little as he glimpsed the still forms bristling with arrows. This was the Indian's night. He wondered if Joe had escaped.

A superb figure swung into the firelight, Petuspa, the war chief. He shouted an order at some warriors crowding eagerly around the kegs of alcohol, for he hated the white man's *miniwakan ska* as bitterly as he hated its maker. He was one of the few chiefs who saw that alcohol was one of the white man's strongest allies. With it he debauched and destroyed the Indian.

For a moment the warriors hesitated, then fiercely Petuspa repeated the order. Sullenly they threw the kegs on the fire. Many were the guttural exclamations of wonder as the blue flames leaped high.

Facing death and torture, Aletes' every sense was now abnormally keen. Suddenly the warriors jerked his hands behind him and bound his wrists. The strain on his wounded shoulder seemed intolerable, yet he found the strength to endure it without betraying his suffering to his captors.

After stripping him of his personal belongings, it seemed to amuse Petuspa to mount his captive on one of the mules that had carried the alcohol. The war chief saw something both comic and degrading in a mule. To the red aristocrat, the long-eared hybrid was only fit for a white man to ride.

VII

Into the future I look,
Hear ye, O my people;
No more the buffalo,
No more the village by the river,
No more the children playing in the sun.
Come now, ghosts, and tell me,
Where is the Dakota?
The dead come not back again,
Where once a thousand war ponies stamped the ground,
An old man talks to himself,
Saith the spirits,
Saith the spirits.

—*Song of the Medicine Man*

THE cruel hours from sunrise to mid-afternoon had gnawed deeply into Aletes' reserve vitality, yet he had managed to hold a stoical front against the savage threats and menacing weapons of the young warriors, ever incited to new devilment by the relentless Panther, who found it easy to excite their ferocity by chanting of the valor of his comrade, Miniomni, and of the cowardice of the white man who had refused to face a Dakota in hand-to-hand combat. But for the discipline imposed by the stern Petuspa, a knife soon would have found the white youth's heart, but under the chief's baleful eye even the revengeful Panther did not dare go beyond threats and weapon flourishing.

Ere hoisting him on the mule, the Indians had bound his hands behind his back with rawhide thongs. The strained position made it impossible for him to favor his wounded shoulder. The jolting, stiff-legged gait of the mule brought recurrent ripples of pain from his wound. Yet his dogged spirit held fast to the thought that he must endure without whimpering. After what seemed to him to be long centuries of pain, the war party approached the camp.

Warriors, squaws and children, yelping, screaming and howling, streamed out from the tepees to welcome the victors. Every cur in the camp joined in the demoniac chorus, and even the fat papooses, left in their snug skin cradles by their excited mothers, added their vocal mites to

the pandemonium. With difficulty the mounted warriors saved their captive from the raging squaws, who struck at him with knives and sticks, screeched insults and spat at him.

Aletes was hauled from the mule and thrown into a tepee. The "dog soldiers," or camp police, drove back the excited mob, and, under Petuspa's direction, the owner of the tepee was given charge of the prisoner.

As an additional precaution against escape, the Indian had bound the feet of his prisoner. In the center of the tepee a tiny fire blazed fitfully. The Indian jailer lay at ease upon a willow bed covered with robes. Naught to him were the sufferings of the white man. Now and then he roused up to push the sticks, laid like the spokes of a wheel, a little farther into the fire, and to stare at the captive with the cold malignancy of a vulture. At times he recited to the white man the various tortures he was to endure on the morrow. This seemed to amuse him, although it was plain to him that the captive did not understand a word of his guttural talk.

He fumbled in a beaded bag and drew forth several scalps. Aletes saw that one scalp was that of a woman. He shuddered inwardly as he stared at the long golden-brown hair. The Indian grunted his satisfaction. It was pleasant to lie comfortably on a willow bed and taunt a white man.

Aletes had come to accept the gnawing pain of his wound and the throb of his tortured wrists as a part of the scheme of life, and thus had conserved his nerve force and vitality. Thirst, however, gave him no rest. He was continually thinking of the cool, bubbling springs from which he had drunk. Particularly did he remember a spring near his home town. Visions of that little spring, ice-cold, clear and sparkling, taunted him cruelly. What wouldn't he give to return to that spring, and drink and drink and drink!

Yet, save for the visions prompted by thirst and exhaustion, his calm, practical spirit held imagination in check. He was helpless, but he refused to give way completely to despair.

He knew that he could expect no mercy from the Dakotas, for they had bound his hands and feet and permitted him to suffer hunger and thirst. His only hope was that they would kill him quickly, though he gave little encouragement to that hope. His nature, grim, stubborn and practical, simply stood at bay, prepared to endure whatever agony Fate held in store for him.

He thought of Joe, trying to remember the precise moment the little man had disappeared. It seemed to him that Joe had faded from view a breath before the arrows had wrought their deadly work. Yet it scarcely was possible that he had escaped.

ALETES relaxed as best he could, although the bedlam of Indian night made rest impossible. Not far away some fiend was pounding a drum. To the dull monotonous tunking, the dancers chanted in wild chorus. Squaws lifted piercing shrieks for the dead, and the dogs barked continually. The whole village seemed to be engaged in a talking contest. He had once read an account of the taciturnity of the Indian. He now realized that most of the written accounts of the habits and customs of the Indians were written by men who had never suffered a night of torture in an Indian camp.

There came a faint scratching at the tepee flap, and a low, guttural summons.

"Brother, one who talks with spirits desires to look on the face of the white man that his medicine may be strengthened," said the voice.

The old Indian did not stir from his bed. A medicine-man desired to look on the face of the white captive. Who was he to cross the desire of one who talked with spirits?

"It is good," he droned, "O talker with spirits."

The medicine-man entered the tepee. He was wrapped from head to foot in a white robe. Aletes caught a glimpse of a burning eye through the folds of the robe. For a moment the medicine man stared at him, and then half-turned to the Indian.

"Too loose," he grunted, pointing at the bonds of the captive.

Grunting a little, the old Indian rose from his comfortable bed, shambled over to the captive and knelt down to examine the bonds. Aletes felt the cold, clawlike fingers on his swollen wrists.

Then something rose from the robe of the mysterious visitor and descended on the head of the kneeling warrior. Aletes felt the weight of a limp body across his legs. Again the robed figure struck the Indian, and then seized his legs and dragged him to the far side of the tepee. The next moment the youth felt a knife sever his bonds, and caught the warning whisper, "It's Joe!"

The little frontiersman hauled his partner to his feet and wrapped the robe of the dead Indian about him.

"Straight ahead to the crick," he whispered. "Your hoss is in some cottonwoods under a big sandstone cliff, about two miles down. Float—take far side of crick! Wait fer me! Skip!"

Aletes did not try to think. By some miracle Joe had released him, and he would obey the resourceful little man to the letter, and trust to his good fortune. Covered from head to foot with the robe, he made a slow exit from the tepee.

The dogs, as he stalked toward the creek, gave him several thrills. Excited by the white man's scent, they barked furiously, and one even ventured to nip at his heels, but he strode on with what he conceived to be the slow, dignified stride of an Indian warrior. The dancing and excitement made the barking of the dogs seem trivial and commonplace. Robed figures were passing to and fro constantly. A short distance from the fires every shape became blurred and indistinct.

Once a warrior addressed the youth, but he did not pause. This aroused no suspicion on the part of the Indian. The one wrapped so tightly in his robe was communing with his guardian spirit.

As he entered the cottonwoods, a young squaw suddenly appeared and came toward him slowly, thinking him a seeker of love. He turned away from her. She put her hands over her heart and ran toward the camp, burning with shame. She had approached a warrior in the dark, supposing that he was seeking a maiden, and had been spurned. For days she would hang her head and look at no man.

The youth's one desire now was to feel the cooling waters of the mountain stream, yet he knew that he must not halt until he was out of hearing of the noises of the camp. Without mishap, he passed through the protecting gloom of the cottonwoods and slipped through the willows that lined the creek. It took all his will power to wade the stream, for his throat muscles were jerking for a gulp of the cool water. But he resolutely pressed on down the far bank until he was out of hearing of the din of the camp.

Now and then a rattlesnake buzzed

faintly. For once he welcomed the buzzing of the hidden snakes. Indians were not likely to be prowling through a gloomy tangle of willows infested with rattlesnakes. Warily he slipped through the willows, and came out on a little grassy bank. There he threw the robe into the rushing current, and jerked off his boots and buckskin shirt. Then, with a great sigh of pleasure, he slipped into the cool water, and sank down until the little waves splashed his face. When a little of the water had worked its way down his throat, he thought he could hear his blood fairly singing for joy. His body soaked up the reviving fluid like a dry sponge. However, he fought back the desire to gulp his fill of the cold, sweet water, drinking only enough to dull his thirst.

Then he made a bundle of his shirt and boots, tied the sleeves around his neck, and waded into the rushing current, to float luxuriously in the foam and smother. The cool flood, fed by mountain springs, allayed the fever in his wound and eased the pain of his lacerated wrists. After his long hours of suffering, the rushing water seemed to caress and to soothe his every nerve and to remove every physical and mental irritation.

Lightly and swiftly the current carried him. He had only to keep afloat, only to rest lightly on the water. At times he would shift his burden to his chest, and float on his back down the crystal flood, with the little waves caressing his cheek. Now and then, as he floated close to the far bank, a trailing willow would brush his face.

When he saw the sandstone cliff looming through the gloom, he left the soothing water regretfully. Faithful received him with a startled snort; but, after a few pats and low-toned admonitions, the good horse nuzzled his dripping master and showed every evidence of being glad to feel his touch again.

VIII

For wimmin or wine, fer gold or lies,
My true-tried pard I'll ne'er forsake;
In storm or shine, in life or death,
I'll stick by him to the last bone-break.
—*Song of the Pard*

BREATH before the deadly arrows had ended the ambitions of the Mubsley party, Joe had taken flight. With something of the action of a flying squirrel, he had gained the back of Aletes' horse, severed the picket rope and sped down the canyon, while the nearest warriors were struggling with his partner.

The Indians had dismounted above the camp, and crept up on two sides. The way down the dark canyon was open. Their wild yelps of triumph prevented them from hearing the thump of the horse's hoofs. In their mad excitement and fierce desire to secure the scalps of their victims, they failed to note that one man had escaped.

The alcohol had not dulled the little

A silent, terrible fight

man's thinking powers. Perhaps Aletes had fallen, but he would make sure. A man's first duty was to save himself. A dead man can be of no help to his partner.

With an uncanny sense of location, he pulled in Faithful at the point where the stream curved into the hole in the canyon wall. Dismounting, he dropped on one knee and listened intently, and then led the horse down the center of the stream and into the opening. On each side the creek extended to masses of boulders which blocked the corners of the opening, but, by keeping to the center of the stream, he was able to lead Faithful into the cavern, although the saddle horn scraped the low-hanging lip.

Feeling his way in the intense darkness, he left the horse in a great room hollowed out by countless floods, and returned to the stream that roared into eternal night.

He knew that the Indians would, doubtless, with the coming of daylight, note the hoofprints, but he was sure that they would not investigate the hidden waterway. Such freaks of nature they regarded as the work of the Evil One. To them, the dark opening in the canyon wall was the mouth of the Evil One. The white boulders in the corners of the mouth of the Evil One were his teeth. A stream flowed into the mouth of the Evil Spirit, yet he was always thirsty. As he swallowed the stream, so would he swallow a man.

By the dawn-light, through the boulders wedged in the side of the opening, the frontiersman watched the war party, with Aletes in the center of the column, ford the stream above the point where he had entered the water. Passing a few rods above Faithful's trail, they had not discovered his hoofprints. They rode on slowly, talking and gesticulating. Joe sighed his relief when the last painted and befeathered rider had passed. He waited until he was sure they were clear of the canyon before he led Faithful from the grotto.

He was not long in gaining the summit of a hill from which he could sweep the country with his telescopic eye. Far to the north, he saw the Indians moving in a straggling column. Now and then he caught the flash of a lance head or the gleam of a brass ornament.

He sent Faithful in a wide-flung circle to the east and approached the Indian camp from the down-stream side. He had no well-defined plan, but entertained some vain hope of rescuing the youth from the clutches of the Dakotas by deliberately crawling into camp under cover of darkness.

He tied the horse among some cottonwoods. The sun was down, but the afterglow touched the trees and the swiftly-flowing stream with purple light. The turtle doves were singing mournful farewells to the day, and now and then a nighthawk clove the air with sudden whirring twang. Swiftly and silently as some twilight ghost, the frontiersman slipped toward the camp.

White Buffalo, one of the medicine-men of the band, was communing with the spirits and making medicine in a little glade amid the cottonwoods. So engrossed was he in his meditations that he did not see the white man until the deadly and intent figure was confronting him, knife in hand.

He drew his knife, but, Indian-like, ere their wrists locked, as Joe had hoped, he must tell his name and boast.

"White Buffalo will take the heart of the white man for medicine," he snarled, "and his hair for ornament!"

A silent, terrible fight in the little opening, while the turtle doves cooed sweetly and the nighthawks zoomed through the purple dusk. Presently,

such was the desperate fury of Joe's attack, the Indian received a mortal wound. He sank to earth and died quickly and silently, for there was no time for speech or death-song.

For a moment the frontiersman contemplated his fallen foe, and then a plan came to him. He returned to Faithful and cached his rifle, which, fearful that the report would be heard in the camp, he had not dared to use.

Returning to the little glade, he donned the costume of the medicine-man, as well as a horrible wig made of the scalp and long braids of the talker with the spirits. He experienced some difficulty in trimming his billy-goat beard with his hunting knife, but he finally cut it down to a stubble. Then he applied the paints of White Buffalo to his face and hands.

THUS disguised, he had made his way to Running Wolf's tepee and effected Aletes' release. Then, to give Don plenty of time to escape, he stepped from the tepee to confront a number of young warriors who were approaching it, evidently bent on some nocturnal devilment. Among them was the Panther, carrying Aletes' double-barreled gun.

"It is not good," said the Panther, "that the white man whose gun I now hold should live through the night. The slayer of Miniomni should die before the sun shows his face."

"Such is not the will of Petuspa," said another. "Petuspa has given the white man into the keeping of old Running Wolf. It is ordered that he be tortured before the people."

"There will be little thought of the white man with the coming of the sun," declared the Panther. "Are not the women packing now that we may move with the coming of light to receive the presents of the Great White Father? It would be a good deed to kill the white man now."

Abruptly he turned to Joe, standing before the closed tepee flap, wrapped from head to foot in the robe of the medicine-man. As the Panther turned to him, seeking his approval and support, Joe's quick mind conjured up another plan.

Holding his head low like a man communing with his medicine, he made the sign meaning "wait." The Panther hesitated, but Joe still barred his way toward the prisoner's tepee. Before the Indian could overcome his awe of the medicine-man, Joe had signed that the prisoner should be killed by the Panther—at which a light of fierce joy showed on the Indian's face—but that, until morning, he was to be left unharmed.

Joe waited anxiously when the message was finished. Had the Indian understood—was he convinced? For, despite Joe's perfect familiarity with the Dakota tongue, he dared not speak. The Panther would know it was not White Buffalo's voice.

"It is well," said the Panther.

Joe turned abruptly and walked steadily toward the distant cottonwoods. He passed many robed figures, but was not annoyed by the dogs. Apparently the scent of his Indian costume dulled the suspicions of the prowling curs.

Once in the gloom of the cottonwoods, he sprang forward into a run. Gaining the bank of the creek, he plunged into the stream and discarded the robe and horrible wig. He paused long enough to scrub his head vigorously, and then crossed the creek and slipped through the willows and brush and into the open country. Apparently tireless, he trotted through the gloom, a wild figure that might easily have been taken for an Indian. As a matter of fact he was far more a creature of the wild than the Indian, and far more deadly. To the Indian's natural cunning, he added the thinking powers of the white man.

He was soon wading the creek opposite the point where he had hidden Faithful. Aletes waded into the shallows to help him ashore.

"How in the name of Heaven—" cried the youth, shaken out of his habitual calm for once.

"Never mind how I did it," snapped the dripping Joe, shaking himself like a dog. "It's movin' time fer us. When the Injuns find that old guard of yours dead as Moses, they may send a war party on our trail, although I heard they was packin' to git to the post and git their presents from the Government. Jes' the same we move. I learned something this trip, Don. Fer a knock-'em-cold weapon, put a rock in a medicine sack. That's what I fixed your guard with. *Ka-sunk*, and it's all over. No noise or nothin'—jes' *ka-sunk!* Now fer the hoss, and a little skip and then some buffalo meat. We'll take turns ridin' the hoss; then, when we kin dry some meat, we'll use him fer packin'. I'm thinkin' our troubles are about over."

A FEW days later the members of a long wagon train sighted two men coming toward them across the prairie. One of the men was leading a horse.

At the signals of the two, the captain of the train ordered a halt.

"I don't know," Joe told the captain, after recounting the escape of his partner and himself from the Dakotas, "as I'd be in any hurry to go on. The Dakotas are coming to the post to git presents, and they're pretty ugly. When I was in their camp, they were talkin' about takin' the presents with one hand and holdin' arrers in the other. I'd wait till they was clear of the post, and on their hunting ground west of the Spirit Hills. There's a good campin' place a little ways beyond here. Circle your wagons there and wait a few days, I'd say. You don't need a couple of good men, do you?"

"Yes, I do," replied the captain emphatically. "A number of our people have become discouraged and are going back. Do you know the country beyond Laramie?"

"You bet!" was the frontiersman's cheerful reply. "Went onct as fur as the big river that empties into the Pacific." He turned to Aletes, with the quizzical, paternal smile with which he habitually regarded the youth. "How about you, boy? Want to take a trip to Oregon and have a look at the Pacific? Maybe Calijiforny, where they say they dig out the nuggets bigger'n a man's head. There's the country fer yeller iron! These here Spirit Hills are poor pickin's aside Calijiforny."

Aletes, who had listened closely to the conversation between Joe and the captain of the train, shook his head slowly.

"No, Joe," he said rather sorrowfully; "I think it would be better for me to go with the people who are returning home. I've had a great deal of bad luck. But for you, I would have nothing at all. I see now that, until a man learns a lot of things, he is more or less of a burden to his friends. I'll return home, open a gun shop and get a new start. Maybe I'll try for gold in the West again some time."

"Now is as good a time as any," remarked Joe dryly. "If I waited till I started with an outfit, I'd never git started."

For a moment the old frontiersman searched the face of his young partner for any sign of fear. No, the boy

wasn't afraid; he was just the sort that had to move in his own way.

"I guess you know your own heart better than anybody else," he said mournfully. "I'd figgered, maybe we'd have several trips together out yonder, but I guess it is better fer you to go back to the town country. You're young, and there's a heap of fine girls back there, and a young feller ought to git him a strappin' young woman and raise him a bunch of good Americans." He sighed heavily. "Wouldn't want no pard of mine to be like me—with squaws. Yep, that's it, Don; go back to your home folks. When the West has more people, bring your wife and kids out here and let the younguns grow up in that park you been tellin' me of—the place where the Injuns jumped you. Some day old Joe will come driftin' in, without a tooth in his head, to play with your youngsters and chore around the place fer grub and blankets."

Aletes smiled.

"You'll always find a welcome. As long as I live, I'll always think of you," he said earnestly.

"Well, well," mourned Joe. "Always a lone trail fer us old cusses. Go back, Don, but fer me the trail toward the settin' sun—me and old Never-fail and a little salt."

Yet as Aletes rode away from the camp with the fainthearts, he began to visualize the future. He would return to his home town and open a gun shop. He would make true and beautiful weapons for other men to use. When his day's work was done, he would seek his boarding-house. He might even get married and settle down and become a solid, respected citizen.

The return to the home town began to assume a dull, drab tone. In sharp contrast to it were the days and nights on the sunset trail. While he was working in his quiet, little shop, other men would be seeing new country and experiencing splendid adventures. Why, the captain of the train had said that the Oregon country was crossed by mighty rivers and that it was destined to be one of the greatest States in the Union. California, too, was a paradise. But he was returning to the stuffy little home town to make guns. What was wrong? What had changed him? Was there something in the air of the West that made a man tire of the old things, the old routine, the worn paths? Was his uncle right when he said that once a man knew the West his heart turned to it always?

Suddenly he turned Faithful, and bade the astonished faint-hearts an abrupt farewell. The West had claimed him for its own.

Joe grinned happily as the youth rode into the camp.

"Well, partner, how'd you find all the home folks?" he greeted.

"Just fair," laughed the youth, as he dismounted, "but none of them knew how good buffalo meat tastes or what it means to travel the sunset trail with a good pard."

BEN WRIGHT

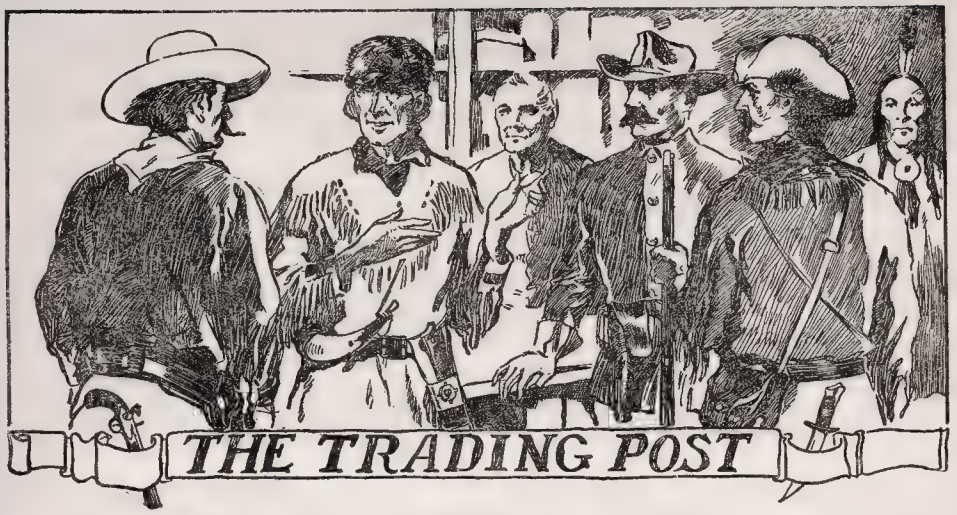
By RACHEL MIDDLEBROOK

IN THE early 1850's, emigrant trains deviated from the beaten trail that led into California over the High Sierra, and wound westward over the Warner Mountains from Fort Hall, into the isolated Modoc country. Here the covered wagons would camp near Bloody Point on Tule Lake, at the mercy of the Indians. The helpless pioneers would fight off for a time the showers of poisoned arrows from hidden bows. Then, from the west, into the midst of their despair would come a little band of galloping horsemen—red and blue shirts, broad slouch hats, handkerchiefs waving as a sign of peace and aid—Ben Wright and his band of Californians, dashing upon the Modocs to send them scuttling, a line of lifeless braves on their trail.

Indians upon Lost River would steal cattle and terrify lonely settlers. Again Ben Wright would come, dressed in buckskins, long black hair hanging, often mistaken for an Indian. More silent than his lurking foe, he would creep through the tule swamps, reconnoiter among the tents of the unsuspecting savages, and returning, lead his band to surround and exterminate the Modoc rancheria. A massacre on Pit River, another on the Klamath—Ben Wright, the pugnacious son of gentle Pennsylvania Quakers, was always chosen the avenger. He followed the American frontier westward in the forties, and became an outstanding figure in California and Oregon when law was a matter of bullet and knife.

His friends called him fair, just, and admired his uncanny skill in tracking down the red man whom he had sworn to punish. His enemies, who included many of the whites and most of the Indians, called him atrociously cruel. Their stories of his exploits vary as greatly as their views upon his character, but even the most generous admit his part in the vital encounter of his career, the Ben Wright massacre in the winter of 1852-53, when he drew forty-five Modocs together under a flag of truce and massacred most of them by means of fighters held ready in ambush. He was a rough man and an uncouth, who had lived so much among the Indians that he sincerely believed in fighting them only with their own crafty weapons.

Later, however, as a Government sub-agent among the Indians in southern Oregon, Wright was known for his fairness and kindliness to the natives. In 1856 he was lured from his cabin and instantly killed by a band of Indians contemplating a general massacre. His body was mutilated beyond recognition. The superstitious savages later told that they had cut away his heart, cooking and eating it in the hope of gaining for themselves the honored courage of Ben Wright.



THE STRAIGHT OF IT

FIRST of all we want to set J. E. Grinstead right and correct an error which crept into the magazine in connection with his story, "Oklahoma '89". Mr. Grinstead, as his readers know, is scrupulously careful in his stories and can always be relied upon for the authenticity of his history and background—on which reliability he justly prides himself. It is doubly unfortunate, therefore, that one of those editorial slips which seem to delight in creeping in every once in so often chose his story on which to pick.

In the introductory paragraph and in the Trading Post for "Oklahoma '89" we referred to the Cherokee Strip, whereas the story itself was concerned with the Oklahoma opening.

"I have returned from my bear and alligator hunt in the piney woods of east Texas, and am going to call your attention to a slight discrepancy in the announcement of 'Oklahoma '89'," Mr. Grinstead promptly checked us up. "In your reference to it in the Trading Post there occurs, ' "Oklahoma '89" is a story of the opening of Cherokee Strip.' I think you will find that the only reference that is made to the Cherokee Strip in that yarn is that those who went into Oklahoma from the north, or Kansas side, had to cross the strip, while those on the south, or Indian Territory side, had a chance to get right on the line in the Chickasaw country. I tried to make all this plain in the story, and think I did. You will understand all this better, when I recall to your mind a thing that you obviously knew but overlooked. That is: Oklahoma, the original territory, was opened to settlement in April 1889. The Cherokee Strip was a little slice of land that lay between the north line of Oklahoma and the south line of Kansas. It was claimed by the Cherokee Indians as an outlet to the hunting grounds to the westward, over which they could travel to and fro without crossing the reservations of other Indians. It was commonly called the Cherokee Outlet. This little strip of land was not ceded to the United States Government until 1893, and it was more than four years after the adventure of old Bent Raborn's clan that the Strip, and several other small reservations, were opened to settlement. Compared to the original opening of Oklahoma, the opening of the Strip loomed up about like a country dogfight compared to breaking the Hindenburg Line. By that time the Government had learned how to handle such things. There never could be but one occurrence like the opening of Original Oklahoma. No Government of sane people would let such a thing occur a second time. It cannot be described, either in words or pictures.

"The picture you have for the heading is typical, but it couldn't have happened in the Cherokee Strip, because it shows water! There wasn't enough water in the Cherokee Strip at that time to keep a horned toad alive twenty minutes, except a little brackish trickle in that dreadful gash in the plain known as the Salt Fork of the Cimarron, and it was nowhere near the line."

We stand corrected, and penitent—and swear to goodness it will not happen again!

SPEED ON THE DRAW

RECENTLY we published a short discussion between J. E. Grinstead and Colonel George B. Rodney regarding the proper method of carrying a six-gun for quick action. Although the item took but a little space in the Trading Post, its fascinating subject matter was quick to attract attention and brought in a fine harvest of interesting letters, of which we unfortunately have room to print but a few.

The following, from a former peace officer of Wyoming, highly recommended by the governor of that state, comes out in no uncertain terms in support of Mr. Grinstead:

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
DEAR SIR:

I read with a great deal of interest the discussion between Colonel Rodney and Mr. Grinstead regarding the proper location on the person of the six-gun.

Having been brought up under the jurisdiction of Judge Colt, as you might say—I was raised in Montana, Wyoming and the Dakotas—and also following an occupation for some years necessitating the carrying of sidearms, perhaps I can shed some light on the subject that may be helpful.

Everything else laid aside—except the necessity of getting the gun quick—granted that the gunman is right-handed—there is no place else that is naturally so handy as the right side, a little forward, well down on the leg, bottom of holster tied fast just above the knee. The longer the gun the farther down it must hang so that the hand

gripping the butt will not have to be raised unnaturally high in order to clear the muzzle when brought to horizontal. In the longer models such as the Colt's Frontier pattern and the Bisley Model with the seven-inch barrels, the tip must hang almost to the knee cap. As these guns are close to a foot in length it is easily understood why this is necessary. In other words, the weapon must be lifted vertically a foot before it can be leveled, even from the hip. When one is in a hurry, as is invariably the case when the weapon is needed, he is very likely to attempt to level the weapon before the tip of the muzzle is clear of the top of the holster—a loss of valuable time. Numberless funerals might have had different principals but for this one little mistake. So much for the necessity of carrying the gun very low when on the right side. Now then let us look at the arguments against this position.

In the first place it is extremely troublesome to have several pounds of hardware bumping and pounding at your leg every time a violent or even quick move is made. The motion of a galloping horse will cause the gun to beat the leg black and blue in a day's time, unless strapped very tight to the leg itself. Should the animal decide to buck —which seems to be the constitutional right of all Western cayuses—the gun is not only a hindrance but is very likely to jump out of the holster and drop to the ground.

Your range waddie mounts from the left side of the horse, standing facing the opposite way from that in which the horse is facing. Well forward by the left shoulder. This is a range bred necessity. It lessens the temptation for the brute to use his hind foot too freely. The left foot is then placed in the stirrup. The right hand grips the horn or pommel. The rider swings the right leg over the cantle of the saddle. The right foot describes an almost perfect half circle. If the animal plunges forward, which happens most of the time, the motion assists the rider into the saddle, instead of flinging him to the rear as would be the case when mounting English fashion. Now then for the relation of the six-shooter to all this. When the gun is carried on the right side and low, unless it is tied securely in the holster it will slip out at that point in the movement when the rider's right thigh is higher than the torso. If the gun is tied in the holster—as I've witnessed some greenhorns do—and unless the holster is tied firmly to the leg, the force of the swing into the saddle brings the gun backward and when the seating is effected your hero is sitting on his gun. Very uncomfortable, to say the least—especially if the bronc gives a few stiff-legged buck-jumps.

Now then as to the position on the left hip, slightly to the front, grip pointing forward, as did Mr. Grinstead's hero in "The Master Squatter." This position is used by all the old cowmen that I know. And I was raised on the range. The reasons are simple and practical to range uses. This brings the weapon fairly high at the waistline. Thereby lessening the tendency to flop around like a sheep's tail when the wearer moves quickly.

It takes but one movement after the hand falls on the grip to bring it out in a parabola shaped curve and *pointed* at the target. All one motion. The front sight or muzzle never catches in the holster.

In mounting, being on the left side it is never inverted, thereby lessening the possibility of dropping out of the holster. I believe that the foregoing are a few at least of the very good reasons why the left side, butt forward, muzzle pointing down and back, is the most popular.

I have seen the six-gun worn on the right side and well down on the leg by some mighty fast men. But they were always afoot. Usually gamblers and saloon toughs. To my memory I have never seen a mounted cowman carry his gun in this manner.

I own and use one of the seven-inch barreled Frontier pattern Colt .45's myself. This particular arm was made in 1872 for the U. S. Government. It was carried by two Kansas sheriffs in the early days—father and son—and has been in my possession for some years now. I am afraid if it were notched for every man it has accounted for the steel would be completely filed away, or at least rendered useless. Sometimes my work still carries me onto the range horseback, even in this day of autos, where when I do need a gun it must be of fairly long range and maximum shocking power. This one carries up point blank at a hundred yards. Using the forty-five long, smokeless powder.

Kent Drew,
Omaha, Nebraska.

On the other hand, here is a note from an old-timer who ranched in Cochise County, Arizona, in the early eighties. Experience enough he certainly has had—and he's ready to back it up, too!

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
DEAR SIR:

Now I just must differ with J. E. Grinstead's article about carrying a gun on the "left hip" unless a man is left-handed and shoots with his left hand. I was raised in Arizona and Texas and my old pard was Frank Lelie, Buckskin Frank. He was a gun-fighter but not a killer and the fastest gunman in either State. He carried his gun on his right hip, handle to the front. He was my teacher, and I will bet $100 to $50 that even though I am past sixty I can pull and fire before any man can pull from his left hip if he is right-handed.

John R. Dean,
(Johnnie Dean) Colonel, O. R. C.
Seattle, Washington.

Again here is another old-timer who has traipsed all over the West. "Grinstead is right," says he—and proceeds to prove it in a mighty interesting letter:

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
DEAR SIR:

I have spent around thirty-five years in the West, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, California, Nevada, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Kansas, and Nebraska. Have known many Western types of citizen—the cowboy, prospector, miner, saloonman, gambler, badman, rustler, train-robber, etc. J. E. Grinstead is right about packing a gun on the left side as described, but only certain ones do so. Many gunmen packed the gun on the right hip and shot from the hip. When the low-hung holster was in use, the wearer would tie the lower end of the holster to the leg to keep the gun from jamming when a quick draw was needed. The low-hung was to give the arm more freedom and wider sweep; but it was discovered by a keen man-killer that a lot of lost motion was attached to the low-hung, and he devised the belt holster.

The hip-fire holster is attached to belt with a single rivet, so as to allow holster to pivot with an upward motion. The end of holster is cut off enough to allow muzzle of gun to protrude; a chunk is cut out around trigger-guard to allow insertion of finger. Hipshots rarely drew gun from scabbard, for the reason that the target was usually but a few feet distant, making a miss almost impossible. Some of these "hip-shots" were very deadly. Of course "two-gun" shooters used both hips and many were ambidextrous where a single gun was used, but when both draws were made simultaneously, the right hand took the right-hand gun and the left the left—no crossing over as in a single draw, and the handles were pointed back instead of front.

Many saloon men, bartenders, gamblers, sports and rounders carried the Colt gun without a holster or belt, shoving it down on the left hip, with handle to front—between waistband and body, using the little hinged clip that is in the right shoulder open as a projection to hang onto the waistband. I have known some to wear a gun in the waistband on the right hip with handle pointed back. These were what is known as "snap shooters." The gun is drawn with a hinge-like movement of the arm, as though closing, and the shot fired from in front of the hip a little and a trifle away from it. This gives the wrist free play to move the gun in a weaving motion. This cannot be done with the "hipshot" through the scabbard. Another "snapshot" is to raise the gun up and backward over the shoulder, bringing it down in a sweeping motion onto the target, pulling the trigger the moment of contact of sight and target. This is popular in shooting at running objects, but has too much lost motion for rapid action.

Many cowboys pack the gun on the right hip to the rear when on foot, and a little further in front when riding, so as not to chafe the cantle of the saddle. Many pack the gun in a holster on the side of the pommel when riding, and inside the shirt on the left side when walking, using waistband for a support. Many officers of the law carried a gun in a scabbard in the hip pocket right. Some wore regulation belt and holster. I packed a gun as a cowboy on the right hip; as officer on the left side, handle front; never in hip-pocket.

Having the gun on the left hip—or right—is an advantage to a two-handed man, and a big advantage to a right-handed shooter, provided it isn't known that he is right-handed. For most who are not in the know would expect the wielder to use the hand most convenient to the gun. The "cross reach" has fooled many a one.

However, I think habit has a lot to do with how a gun is toted. One of the most deadly killers I knew was an officer of the law, a Texan. He carried an old wooden-handled forty-five in his coat pocket. He killed his last man in Williams, Arizona, after the man had shot at him twice, one bullet going through his hat, the other wild. He deliberately gave the man a chance to

shoot in order to have an excuse for killing him, and he did kill him twice; that is, he fired two shots, either of which would have caused almost instant death. One through the neck and one through the heart.

I have been over the ground covered by E. E. Harriman in "Six-gun Quarantine". I did some mining where the quarantine fence was built—near Dripping Springs Tank. It's a fine story and deserves a place in historical romances of the West. We must take care to perpetuate these stories, for it will be but a short time till the old-timers and the writers who were born on the ground will have passed. We ought to have a university where those things are taught to the coming crop of Western story writers. We have still plenty of data and enough old-time fiction writers, such as Harriman, Raine, Manlove, Rhodes, Gray, Mulford and a lot of that caliber. We lost a good one when Hough passed out. The automatic started to sweep out the Colt, but it failed; the Colt is back to stay. The automatic can't be depended on where there is dust and grit, and that is the best we have in cowland, so old Colt is still with us.

George C. Boyd,
804 Pine St.,
Omaha, Nebraska.

MORE GRINSTEAD

THE Jaybird Flies" is the title of J. E. Grinstead's latest novel, which will come to you in the next issue of THE FRONTIER. A great tale it is, too; a tale of the early Texas cattle country days on the edge of the Staked Plains, a tale of wholesale rustling—and wholesale retaliation; a tale of range war, and finally of the coming of the Law. It is a story that will rank with "The Scourge of the Little C", "The Master Squatter", and all the other Grinstead favorites.

Two novelettes will accompany the Grinstead novel, a long Western story by Anthony M. Rud, and a shorter novelette with a fine Alaskan setting, by August Eberhardt. Action aplenty you will find in "Red Butte", the Rud story; and "Nemesis", the new Eberhardt tale we predict will be as popular as his "Gold Is Where You Find It", which we recently published.

Among the short stories will be a fine Western by Ernest Haycox. Old Dodge City lives again in this tale, and in it you meet an old-timer who knew and played according to "The Code". "The Tenth Way of Ibn Namrod" is an Arabian tale by Warren Hastings Miller, and one well worth offering as an introduction of this popular writer to FRONTIER readers. "Dutch Courage", by L. Patrick Greene, shifts the scene to the South African frontier. Alanson Skinner will be on hand again with "Cousin Winking Bear's Horse", the last of his Sauk stories—and incidentally the last story he wrote.

Besides these there will be J. R. Johnston, Henry Herbert Knibbs, and others. A right good number we consider it.

THE MAIL POUCH

FIRST out of the pouch this month is a letter from a Colorado reader who rises to corroborate Edwin L. Sabin's article, "All Clear Grit". He too knows Dr. T. and pays tribute to the doctor's almost incredible performance:

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
DEAR SIR:

I have just finished reading "All Clear Grit" by Edwin L. Sabin in THE FRONTIER, and I want to say it is all true from beginning to end, for I have heard the same story from the Doctor's own lips just as it was in Mr. Sabin's article.

I have known Doctor T. all my life, and he is just as Mr. Sabin describes him, being a quiet man, soft-spoken and gentle, but made of strong stuff or he could never have crawled thirty miles through the snow after being shot six times, which I know to be a fact for I have seen the scars.

Dr. T. at the present time is living on a farm which he has back in the hills where he traps and hunts bear. He is an excellent hunter and a fine shot. He is well liked and respected by everyone who knows him and the country would be benefited by it if there were more men like him.

Bert Bardin,
Rifle, Colorado.

Next comes a letter from a Trading Post reader who checks up Edward Parrish Ware on his little article on "The Red River Raft":

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
DEAR SIR:

I feel called upon to correct a false impression conveyed by Mr. Ware in his article, "The Red River Raft". Mr. Ware states that the raft, "finally so impregnated the air with malaria that human existence was unendurable in its vicinity." "The rotting of the logs nearest the mouth of the stream accounted for the deadly malaria." From this, one unfamiliar with the subject would be led to believe that malaria is caused from the rotting of logs or from bad air. This assumption is absolutely incorrect, as our scientists have proven the old theory of paludism or of a sickness exhaled from the ground to be obsolete and wholly wrong. The broad facts on which it was based are sufficiently accounted for by the habits of mosquitoes.

There are many kinds of mosquitoes, but the female Anopheles is the only one which has, and whose bite may transmit to humans—the malarial germ; although even they will not be infected with malaria unless they have bitten a human being having the disease.

V. L. Davis,
401 Penn Ave.,
Turtle Creek, Pa.

And one from a reader who is a booster for Clarence E. Mulford and the old frontier as it was—accurate frontier fiction as we strive to present it in THE FRONTIER:

Editor, THE FRONTIER,
DEAR SIR:

I especially enjoy Mr. Mulford's stories, because while I get all of the thrill that comes from the romance and adventure of Western tales in ordinary they are like accurately photographed movies, true in all of the details. One is getting a lot of accurate information as well as fine enjoyment in losing one's self in the sphere of what is the most satisfying type of fiction to many readers. I like 'em wild, I like 'em woolly, and I like 'em killed where they ought to be killed. "That is what I pay my quarter for," as one New England school-teacher said about Western movies.

I have only been reading THE FRONTIER about one year now, but I look forward to it eagerly each month. Shall miss Alanson Skinner's articles. It seems to me that you are doing a splendid work in scattering such articles as those of Mulford, Skinner, The Cowboy Songs, etc., in a fiction magazine and bringing to people's attention so much of the interesting truths of the Old West and habits of frontier life.

Dr. Theresa Jennings,
224 E. Main St.,
Streator, Illinois.

READERS' FAVORITE COUPON

"Readers' Favorite" Editor, THE FRONTIER,
Garden City, N. Y.

The stories in this number I like best are those marked below (indicate your favorites by numerals 1 to 5—1 for your first choice, 2 for the second, etc.)

— The Devil's Caldron	— Chaparejos
— Songs of the Range	— A Bride Too Many
— The Waters of Bowlegs Creek	— Sam Bass
— Australia—Fortune Land	— Yellow Iron

I did not like _____

Name _____ Address _____

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Men's Union Suits, $1.00, in fancy or plain madras, white or colored stripes, mercerized crepes, pajama checks. Men's Shirts and Drawers, Boys' Union Suits and Children's Waist Union Suits, 75c each. In Canada, Men's Union Suits, $1.50.

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AT THE TOP OF UNDERWEAR FAME STANDS THE TOPKIS NAME

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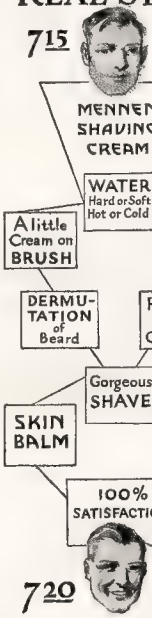

AN efficiency man said to me once, "Only when a method is *right*, can you chart it."

Three million men know that a Mennen Shave is right, chart or no chart.

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Dermutation—the scientific way to master a beard, softens it so that it yields to the razor without a twitch.

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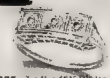
A99—18K White Gold Wrist Watch; 4 Regular cut Blue-white Diamonds; 4 Blue Sapphires; 16 Jewel Guaranteed movement. $42.50



A75—Ladies 18K White Gold Ring; 3 AA1 Quality blue-white Diamonds. Regular $50 value. Price $42.50.

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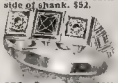

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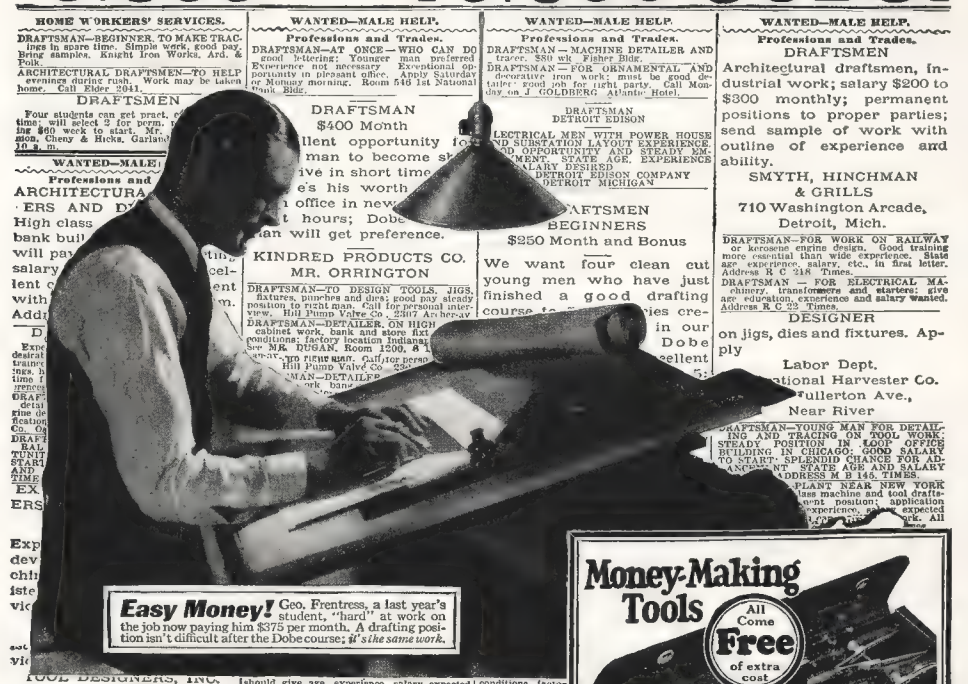

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Until my present classes are filled, I will GIVE, not only these tools, but all needed supplies, even including Drafting Table—without any additional charges! Before you lay down this book—or even turn the page—get a line in the mails to me—and my big book about drafting will soon be in your hands. The special offer of *tools* is for immediate action. Don't expect me to hold it open indefinitely. Clip the coupon *now* for free book:

CHIEF DRAFTSMAN DOBE, Div. 15-95
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Send me FREE and POSTPAID full information about your training, and enough material to show me how easy it is to learn drafting, and how I would like the work. *Include your free tools offer and big NEW book.*

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You can buy all the materials for a complete home direct from the manufacturer and save four profits, on lumber, millwork, hardware, labor.

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Living room, dining room, 2 bedrooms, kitchen, bath. 3 other plans in catalog. Very high grade lumber throughout.

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Large living room with circle-tread open stairway, dining room, kitchen. 3 bedrooms, each with closet. Bath on second floor.

Price includes all lumber cut to fit; highest grade interior woodwork, siding, flooring, windows, doors, glass, paint, hardware, nails, lath, roofing, with complete instructions and drawings. **Freight paid** to your station. Permanent Homes—NOT PORTABLE. Many styles of year'round dwellings, summer cottages and garages to choose from. **Write nearest mill today for FREE Money-Saving Catalog No. 1721.**

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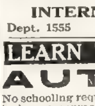

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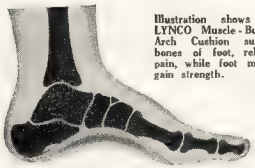

Illustration shows how LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushion supports bones of foot, relieving pain, while foot muscles gain strength.

Rest Your Tender Foot Arches On Soft, Springy CUSHIONS

Never permit them to be propped up by some hard, unyielding support. LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are entirely flexible—they're Nature's first-aid protection against foot aches and pains due to weak or fallen arches.

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See your doctor, chiropodist or shoe dealer —or write us for full information.

KLEISTONE RUBBER CO., Inc.
70 Cutler Street **Warren, R. I.**

Lynco

EASY-WEAR FOOT AIDS

ZBYSZKO,
November 5, 1928

ARCO
January 23, 1926

Here's News!

THIS is perhaps the most amazing bit of *news* that the Physical Culture field has had for a long time.

Arco, world's champion in the field of Physical Symmetry and heads of development, and winner of the first prize at the World's International Physical Culture Contest at Paris in 1914, has joined forces with Zbyszko, in order to give Zbyszko's pupils the benefit of his knowledge of muscular control and bodily development. Here then is everything a man could wish for. Brute strength, *power, sinews* of steel and unequaled beauty and symmetry of bodily development.

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Zbyszko the GREAT
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No matter where you are, what you are doing, who you are, let these two men give you that vital spark that means health, that real capacity to live, the *powerful shoulders* of an ox and the *symmetric beauty* of a Greek god.

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this delightful *new* form of genuine Ivory

"How lovely!" you exclaim when first you see the new graceful cake of Guest Ivory. Like so many millions of other women, you too are instantly charmed by its petite daintiness.

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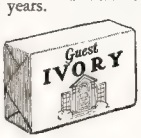
Surely, never was a soap more fittingly garbed to rest upon white washstands. Never was a soap more faultlessly fashioned for feminine fingers.

And most assuredly, one can find nowhere a finer, purer soap at any price. Guest Ivory costs but five cents.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

For the face and hands



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It's good and fragrant — and always

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Gone—that *all-in* feeling

Ills banished—glorious vitality regained—with one simple food

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Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, nibbled from the cake. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

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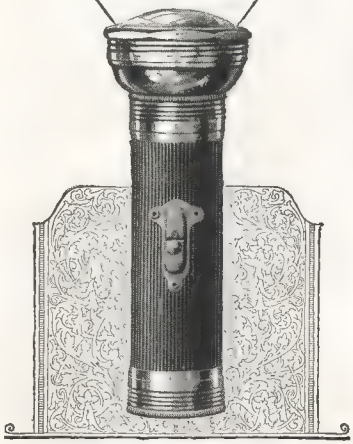
"I AM A GIRL OF SEVENTEEN. I began to get worried when my skin lost its freshness. I was desperate. One day in school a friend offered me one of her Fleischmann's Yeast sandwiches, which she told me were tasty and beneficial. I began to eat Yeast sandwiches. In two weeks I was feeling better; in about three my skin had regained its natural freshness. Now, I feel and look as a girl of seventeen should. The credit is all due to Fleischmann's Yeast."

ANNA WALDRON, Bloomfield, N. J.

"AFTER THE WORLD WAR, I returned home with health greatly impaired. I suffered from numerous ailments, including constipation. One day I saw Yeast cakes served in a restaurant. I decided to try them. I soon noticed I was getting back my appetite and my constipation was leaving me. I am now feeling fine." L. H. KLEEBER, St. Louis, Mo.

THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

BURGESS
FLASHLIGHTS & BATTERIES



SOMETHING to remember is that any good flashlight case practically never wears out. Filled with a Burgess Flashlight Battery, you have done about all that you can to insure yourself against the inconvenience and danger always present in darkness.

Burgess Flashlight Uni-Cels will fit any case you may have. Try them—no better batteries are made.

A Laboratory Product

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY
GENERAL SALES OFFICE: CHICAGO
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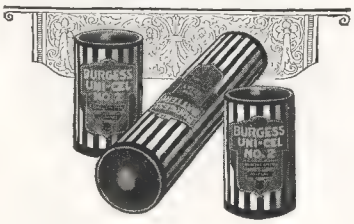
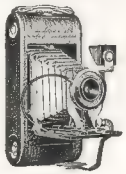


Time flies but pictures stay forever
—*take pictures*

Keep forever alive their school days and games—that muscle-stretching camping trip—the dance with the conquests—keep them all in pictures!

The fleeting moments are caught easiest with an easy-to-use camera. The Ready-Set camera is made for instant action. No bother of setting for light, speed, or distance. It's Ready-Set for pictures. Just open—aim—shoot.



Something new by ANSCO
Ready-Set Cameras

Ansco Speedex Film—in the red box with the yellow band—fits all roll film cameras and is made for inexperienced picture takers to get just the pictures they want.

ANSCO
CAMERAS & SPEEDEX FILM
Pioneer Camera Makers of America
ANSCO—Binghamton, N. Y.

As it should be

SINCE its extra cost, when spread over its billions of output, figures to but three cents per package of twenty, it is quite fair to say that Fatima, in between 'costly' and 'popular' in price, is decidedly more popular than costly

F A T I M A

"What a whale of a difference just a few cents make"

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.

On Sunday afternoon in 1905

WITH the family perched high on the rear seat—with father and perhaps yourself cutting the wind in front, the motor-car in 1905 stuttered and staggered its way across an incredulous countryside. The Sunday drive in those days was the high spot of the week's entertainment—the thrill of that distant decade.

Many cars and many accessories have come and gone in the ensuing years, but one name has survived them all, and still represents the highest attainment in its field. That name is Prest-O-Lite.

Today Prest-O-Lite Storage Batteries light and start millions of cars in all parts of the world—and furnish the power which brings in the finest radio programs.

The Prest-O-Lite sign marks "The Oldest Service to Motorists" and a capable dealer.

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The oldest service to motorists

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Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., *The Kodak City*

THE FRONTIER

Volume IV. No. 2.

May, 1926

Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor!"

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